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# A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion

*By*

C. J. DUCASSE
Professor of Philosophy
Brown University

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*Uxori Carissimae*

*Atque Fidissimae Adiutrici*

# PREFACE

This book is an objective philosophical inquiry into the nature of religion. It seeks to provide a clear and comprehensive account of its basic values. Because religion is an enduring and highly important aspect of culture, it is imperative that responsible men and women pierce the fog of emotional superstition and of equally emotional cynicism which commonly obscures the subject. To aid them in this, the author has shunned both wanton iconoclasm and pious apology.

The book considers the various forms religion can take; the essence common to all its forms; the variety of its manifestations; its vital functions, both personal and social; and the evils which, historically, have infested religion. It describes and comments on the typical religious experiences, including conversion, prayer, and mystical illumination. And it analyzes the chief concepts which enter into discussions of religion—concepts such as those of the supernatural, the miraculous, the magical; divinity, sin, sacredness, worship; soul and spirit; superstition, belief, faith, knowledge; evil, free will, immortality.

The author's purpose is not to lead the irreligious to embrace a faith, nor to cause the religious to repudiate religion or to change belief. His aim is only to clarify the whole subject, so that the religious person may better discern the aspects in which his religion importantly resembles or differs from others and may better appreciate the merits, no less than the defects, of religions other than his own; and so that the irreligious too may better understand and respect the positive values of religion.

The book has developed out of the author's lectures on the philosophy of religion at Brown University over a number of years. It is addressed both to students and to reflective men and women outside academic halls who are striving to discern the nature and implications of religion.

The author's obligations to other writers are made evident by the references to their works in the text or in footnotes. He feels, however, under an especially heavy debt to the late James Bissett Pratt's enduringly wise and illuminating work, *The Religious Consciousness.* To Professors Vincent Tomas and Richard Taylor, colleagues of the author in the Department of Philosophy at Brown who were kind enough to read the typescript, he is indebted for a number of criticisms which enabled him to free the final text from certain defects. For those which doubtless remain they have of course no responsibility.

Grateful acknowledgment for permission to quote is made here to the publishers of various books, specifically mentioned in the footnotes, from which passages have been reproduced in the text. In Chapter 17 the author has drawn freely at a number of places from the text of two public lectures he had delivered earlier: one, entitled *Is a Life After Death Possible?* at the University of California as the 1947 Foerster Lecture on the Immortality of the Soul (University of California Press, 1948); and the other, entitled *Paranormal Phenomena, Nature, and Man,* at Swarthmore College as the 1951 John William Graham Lecture on Psychic Science (*Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research,* October, 1951). The first of the two frontispiece passages is a version of the Buddha's address to the Kalama Khattiyas at Kesaputta.

C. J. Ducasse

Providence
June, 1952

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# A PHILOSOPHICAL SCRUTINY OF RELIGION

Do NOT believe from trust in traditions even if these have been held in honor for many generations and in many places. Do not believe something because many speak of it. Do not believe out of trust in the sages of the past. Do not believe what you have imagined, thinking that it was inspired in you by a God. Do not believe anything on the mere authority of your teachers or of the priests. After scrutiny, believe what you have yourself experienced and perceived as reasonable, that accords with the good of yourself and of others.

(*Kalama Sutta*)

Prove all things; hold fast
that which is good.

*(I Thess. 5:21)*

# INTRODUCTION

Theism and secularism are each vigorously on the aggressive today. The first urges "return to God" as the only and the sure remedy for all the ills of the time. The other sees no hope of doing away with these except through advance and application of scientific knowledge. Secularism points to all the stupidities, cruelties, and futilities which throughout recorded history have been perpetrated in the name of religion; and the protagonists of theism point, on the other side, to the all too patent fact that science has not given man either wisdom or virtue, but has only put into his hands unprecedented powers; and that, armed with them, he now seems in imminent danger of destroying all he values or even his own species altogether.

For many reasons, the author of this book finds it impossible to align himself with either of these contenders. For one thing, the tacit identification of theism, commonly with Christian monotheism, or even, a little more broadly, with monotheism in general, seems to him highly arbitrary, whether monotheism be conceived personalistically or as impersonal pantheism; for polytheism appears to be a more plausible and more defensible form of theistic belief than monotheism. Moreover, and notwithstanding the again common tacit assumption to the contrary, polytheism is not necessarily a lower form of religion than monotheism—even granting that some monotheistic conceptions may justly be ranked as morally higher than some—though not than all—polytheistic ones.

But further, the also widespread tacit identification of religion with theism in some form, seems historically quite indefensible, since there have been and there still are religions in which worship of a God or gods has no part. Again, the fact that some men of admirable character have been atheists, or have not professed even a nontheistic religion, stands in the way of the common assumption that morality, or even ordinary human decency, necessarily rests on belief in the God of monotheism; or if not quite on this, then on belief in divine beings of one kind or another; or if not even on this, then at the very least on adherence to some religion, be it a nontheistic one.

But this book nevertheless contends that *an* important relation does, by and large, obtain between religion and morality; also, that religion has functions to perform, which are of the greatest moment for mankind, and which science is not for a long time likely to perform as well if at all, to say nothing of better; and yet that, to perform them, the dogmas of the religions need not at all be true but only be firmly believed to be true.

As for scientific, or rather scientistic, secularism, on the other hand, the author's incapacity to endorse it wholesale arises from the star-eyed dogmatism, and the obscurantism in reverse, with which contemporary militant humanism is largely infected notwithstanding its professions of allegiance to scientific method. It seems to him that the "naturalism" of most of the aggressive Humanists rests on an arbitrarily narrow conception of "Nature." It appears to him quite possible—indeed, probable—that Nature, i.e., the realm of events that occur in accordance with inherent laws and principles, has dimensions or ranges additional to the space-time ones at present recognized and admirably explored by the natural sciences.

This would entail that some of the allegedly miraculous events, reports of which abound in the history of most of the religions, may not be "supernatural" at all, but only be due to the operation of laws as yet unknown to us, yet just as natural as those of optics, of acoustics, of electricity and magnetism, or others which happen now to have been already discovered.

Also, the possibility seems in no way ruled out, even if far from demonstrated, that intelligent beings not perceptible to our senses may exist; that, like men, they may have a variety of dispositions and of powers; that they may occasionally be able to interfere for good or ill in the affairs of men; and yet that their behavior, like that of men, may be governed by certain psychological laws which, even if more or less different from those of human psychology, are nonetheless natural laws too.

The tacit assumption, which dismisses without investigation as impossible any reportedly "miraculous" fact, simply because it is inexplicable in terms of the scientific knowledge possessed as of today, seems incredibly conceited when viewed in the light of the history of science. The transmutation of elements, which now has been abundantly proved, was in the author's youth dogmatically pronounced impossible by his professors, and derided as but a chimerical dream of medieval alchemists. Hypnosis, which nowadays is demonstrated in every laboratory of psychology, and is employed therapeutically by some psychiatrists, was not so long ago ridiculed under the name of mesmerism and its reality disbelieved by the science-orthodoxy of the time, as indeed it continued to be disbelieved much later by the conjurer Houdini, on the naive ground that he knew how it could be simulated. The history of science contains abundant evidence that hardly any limits exist to the errors capable of being believed, and to the truths capable of being disbelieved, by even distinguished scientists in their own epoch.

The author therefore finds himself as unimpressed by skeptical dogmatism in the name of science, as by fideistic dogmatism in the name of religion. His allegiance to science is wholehearted, but the reader will find in this book, reiterated perhaps to the point of weariness, the assertion that the true spirit of science is neither the will to believe nor the will to disbelieve, but the will to investigate, and the readiness to readjust one's theoretical horizons whenever residual facts may demand it.

Seldom is religion, either in general or in one or another of its particular forms, discussed without initial bias favorable or adverse. Toward a subject charged with so high an emotional voltage as that of religion, complete philosophical objectivity is perhaps impossible; but in the pages of this book it has at least been constantly striven for. As could be expected in hewing to the line of it, and as the preceding remarks will have made evident, the chips have fallen in quite a variety of directions—hitting at one time some opinion prized in certain religious quarters but abhorred by secularists, and at other times hitting beliefs cherished by the latter but condemned in the former. The attempt at objectivity cannot spare, nor cater to, either orthodoxy or skepticism whether scientistic or religious. Rather, it must enter to the debit or the credit side in each case whatever seems to belong there. Notwithstanding the partisan demands from the rival camps of opinion, the portrait of truth cannot faithfully be painted in pure blacks and whites.

It is hoped that the portrait of the truth about religion, which the chapters of this book offer, will be found faithful enough by puzzled hearers of the loud claims made on behalf of religion by one side and of science by the other, to be of some aid in the difficult task of apportioning allegiance intelligently to each side. The book is not an attack either on religion or on science, both of which the author believes to be of vital importance to mankind, but only on the theological imperialism and the equally imperialistic scientism, which are foreign to the essence alike of religion or of science and spring rather from human blindness, arrogance, conceit, and craving to dominate.

## Chapter 1

# RELIGION, MEN OF EARTH, AND THE "MAN FROM MARS"

### Universality and Importance of Religion

Students of anthropology are today pretty well agreed that in the most primitive as well as the most advanced societies religion in some form exists. The reports formerly current that some savage tribes had no religion were eventually found to have had no basis other than the too provincial idea of religion which explorers had brought with them to the study of those tribes.[1]

At the upper end of the scale of civilization, on the other hand, many highly intelligent and educated persons are to be found who are religious. Indeed, it is even a question whether some of the declared adversaries of religion, who think of themselves as having none, do not perhaps think this only because, like the early explorers, they mistakenly identify religion with certain specific forms of it, which are what they repudiate. Religion, of one kind or another, seems to be a nearly universal feature of the life of mankind.

Religion is also a force which affects powerfully both society and the individual as private person. Among primitive peoples, "the rule, with very few exceptions, is that religion absorbs nearly the whole life of a man . . . From birth to death . . . his daily actions are governed by ceremonial laws of the severest, often the most irksome and painful characters."[2] In civilized societies, assumptions—beliefs for the most part held tacitly rather than explicitly—concerning the nature of man, the values of his life, his fate here and possibly in a hereafter, and his relation to such extrahuman agencies as determine or affect it, profoundly influence many of the acts, feelings, and attitudes of a person; for example, his feelings at the prospect of his own death and at the death of others, his behavior toward his fellow men, and indeed the policy of the whole of his life. In the majority of persons these basic assumptions are not conclusions reached through systematic inquiry and critical reflection but rather premises dogmatically implanted in them by the teachings of their religion or of their would-be irreligion. Various such premises, moreover, often have also been official assumptions of the State, and then have greatly affected the lives even of those parts of the population that did not accept them; and sometimes, as in wars of religion, the lives even of the inhabitants of other countries.

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[1] Cf. D. G. Brinton, *The Religions of Primitive Peoples* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), pp. 30 ff.

Irrespective of the truth or falsity of the beliefs of religion, and irrespective also of whether its effects are judged to have been mostly good or mostly bad, religion is thus an extraordinarily interesting and important aspect of the life of mankind.

### The "Man from Mars"

Because, on the one hand, of its position at the very basis of life for many persons, and on the other, because of the dogmatic rather than demonstrable character of its teachings, religion is a subject loaded with strong feeling. Merely to suggest that its tenets might not after all be true is emotionally as disturbing to the devout as would be to anyone a suggestion that the safety of the floor on which he stands is dubious. Hence religious opinions and practices are taboo as a subject of conversation at the affairs of polite society, for on such occasions to make one's self unpleasant is the cardinal sin.

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Yet, because religion has always had and doubtless will continue to have vast influence in public and private matters, there is vital need to shed on its nature and on its positive and negative values such light as the exercise of man's best powers of understanding can provide.

To exercise these, however, means to place one's self as nearly as possible at the standpoint of the fabulous "Man from Mars"—the intelligent, unprejudiced, and impartial but sympathetic and keenly interested visitor to the earth, who observes, reflects upon, and evaluates men, their ideas and their acts, their affairs and institutions.

Such candid, single-minded devotion to truth, understanding and wisdom, however, is the ideal which, no matter how short of it they may fall in practice, has been embraced by those men of earth whom we call philosophers. They are the nearest thing to the "Man from Mars," that earthians have.

## Devotees, Theologians, Priests

When the philosopher observes the men who concern themselves with religion, he notices that the nature of the interest they take in it varies. For some of them—the great majority—religion is primarily or wholly something to be resorted to, and obeyed as well as they can; and but secondarily or not at all, something to be scrutinized, investigated, and evaluated. These earthians are the devout—the men and women whose interest in religion is essentially personal, as rooted in the fact that it gives them something they crave: a scale of values, perhaps; or comfort and courage in adversity, moderation in times of success, a sense of responsibility in positions of power; or a hopeful conception of the meaning of death.

Other men, called "theologians," combine with the devout's practical interest in religion an intellectual interest in the beliefs and the cult of the particular religion which is theirs, and in the oral traditions, books, or other sources from which those beliefs derive. They attempt to state them in some form that can serve as standard and thus guard them from becoming corrupted. They try to systematize, demonstrate, and interpret them—to bring out the distinctions needed to free them from seeming contradictions, to discover proofs of their truth, and to develop their implications in regard to the nature of man, his duties and destiny, his relation to the God or the other supernatural beings their religion believes in, and so on.

These earthians are the dogmatic theologians, who base themselves ultimately on some allegedly divine revelation contained in the sacred books of their religion or in the statements of its founder, prophets, or seers—a revelation supposedly of truths which man could not have discovered for himself. But there are also theologians whose theology professes to be natural not dogmatic, for instance, William Paley's in his *Natural Theology*. They purport to base its conclusions not on any revelation, but only on what man can observe in himself and in the world, and on the inferences human reason can logically draw from those observations. The philosopher, however, when he examines the procedure of these theologians, notices that they seem to know very well somehow in advance of inquiry what conclusions inquiry will yield; so that actually the conclusions they desire to reach are what determines which facts they advert to or ignore, and which interpretation out of rival possible ones they put on the facts they select. This, obviously, is the very converse of scientific procedure: it is the procedure not of the open-minded investigator, who lets the whole of the available evidence dictate his conclusions, but of the advocate in court, bent on making out a case for his client's contentions.

Besides theologians, whether dogmatic or professedly natural, there are also among the devout some whose especial interest in religion is not so much the intellectual one described, as the practical one of guiding, instructing, exhorting, aiding, and otherwise ministering to the religious needs of the general mass of devotees of their religion. They are its preachers, ministers, pastors, divines, shamans, or—to use the general term which denotes all these—its priests.

## Psychologists, Historians, Statesmen

The two specific kinds of interest in religion, just described as respectively distinctive of theologians and of priests, presuppose that, unless they be hypocrites, the members of both groups are themselves votaries of the religion concerned. But there are other kinds of interest in religion which do not presuppose—although they do not preclude—allegiance to some particular religion by the person who harbors them.

One of these interests would be that of the psychologist; another that of the historian of religions; and another, that of the statesman. The psychologist's interest in religion concerns the experiences, the mental states, and the behavior of individuals or of groups under the influence of religion. He observes or gathers accounts of such religious occurrences as conversions, visions, healings, consciousness of sin and of salvation, sense of the presence of God, mystical states, feelings of sacredness, the worshipful attitude, prayer, participation in the ceremonies of the cult, and so on; and the nature of his interest in these is revealed by the kinds of questions he seeks to answer about them. He asks, for instance, what sort of physiological constitution or psychological history have the persons to whom such experiences occur; under what kinds of external circumstances and in what kinds of psychological conditions they occur; how common or rare they are; what effect they have on the lives of those who have them; and how far they are explicable in terms of known psychological laws without postulation of unverifiable supernatural agencies. The psychologist, in short, asks about religious persons the same kinds of questions he would ask if he were investigating instead any other specific range of human experience and activity, such perhaps as artistic creation and aesthetic enjoyment, or mathematical discovery.

The statesman as such, on the other hand, is interested in religion so far as it can function as an instrument for the purposes of the State, or constitute an obstacle to them. He denounces as heresy, or perhaps as "the opium of the people," the religion that stands in the way of those purposes. Or on the contrary he upholds or even enjoins allegiance to the religion whose priests crown him king and declare that he rules by divine right. The possibility of enlisting support for a war by proclaiming it holy; or of quoting some religious text to foster acquiescence in some existing state of affairs—"the poor are always with us"—or to sanction forms of behavior—"thou shalt not kill," "thou shalt not bear false witness"—on which good order in the State depends, are additional instances of ways in which religion acquires interest for the statesman.

The historian of religion—whose domain overlaps here to some extent that of the anthropologist—has, specifically toward religion, the kind of interest which is at the root of historical investigation in general. It is curiosity to ascertain the facts as exactly and as inclusively as possible, past as well as present, distant as well as near; and to trace so far as practicable the influences given events have had or are having upon certain others. The historian of religion attempts to ascertain and to record the beliefs, practices, and other features not only of a particular religion, but of all—including not only the great religions of mankind, but also the religions of even the most primitive peoples, and indeed also of various heterodox minorities in contemporary society. A number of interesting examples of the latter are described in detail in C. S. Braden's recent book *These Also Believe*.

## The Philosopher's Interest in Religion

But among the diverse kinds of interest in religion, there remains to mention and describe the particular one which animates the philosopher, and the nature of which he can observe in himself.

One of the features of it is that, when directed upon religion, it requires the person animated by it to abstract for the time being from such religious beliefs as he personally may have, and to consider without initial partiality the beliefs, practices, and teachings of all religions—not only those which, like Mohammedanism, Christianity, Buddhism, and some others number many millions of adherents, but also the religions of small groups, whether they be more or less primitive peoples like the Australian aborigines, the tribes of Borneo, the African pygmies, the Melanesians, or the Indians of the Americas; or be groups existing in the midst of contemporary Western civilization, such as the Spiritualists, the Mormons, the followers of Father Divine, or the Humanists.

The philosophical interest in the religions of mankind is thus as catholic as the historical, but it is not the merely historical interest. For the philosopher, the many varieties of facts recorded in the histories of religion and in the reports of anthropologists on the religions of primitive peoples are essentially data for one of the chief problems that intrigue him, to wit, in what sense exactly are all those facts "religious" —what, generically, is "religion" or "a religion" if, as commonly is done, one says that Judaism, for instance, is a religion, and also that certain beliefs and practices of, for instance, the Todas in Southern India, constitute their religion. Vastly different as are the two, the fact that both are called religions suggests that some respect of likeness between them is perceived, even if only vaguely. To attempt to identify it and describe it as precisely as possible is one of the typical manifestations of the philosophical interest in religion.

But further, what the philosopher is here concerned to discover is what religion is and does verifiably as distinguished from purportedly. This means, for example, that if a religion or even all religions should purport to insure for their faithful a desirable kind of fate in a life after death, and if the capacity of religion really to insure this is not here and now verifiable in some way, then the philosopher could not include that capacity in his account of the nature and powers of religion, but only the fact that some or possibly all religions claim to possess it.

The requirement of verifiability also means, of course, that, unlike the dogmatic theologians, the philosopher cannot assume *ab initio* that the Bible, or the Koran, or the Bhagavad Gita, or the scriptures of any other religion, are divine and hence authoritative communications. What he knows to begin with is at most that they are *believed* to be such by the devotees of the religions respectively concerned. This belief, like other dogmas, he approaches with an open but alert mind; that is, with a demand for such evidence of its truth or falsity as there may be, and with readiness to be governed by the balance of evidence no matter on which side it may turn out to rest. He keeps at hand the logical "razor" with which Duns Scotus, his pupil Occam, and other medieval philosophers urged that superfluities should be shaved off one's hypotheses. This principle of logical frugality was formulated in various ways, notably, *frustra fit per plura quod fieri potest per pauciora* —the more is in vain when the less will serve to account for the facts to be explained.[3] This means here that a "supernatural" origin for those scriptures shall not be assumed unless a natural one should turn out to be incapable of accounting for such verifiable truth or value as their contents happen to have.

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[3] The form *"Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem,"* to which Sir Wm. Hamilton in 1852 gave the name "Occam's razor," seems to have been invented, centuries after Occam, by John Ponce of Cork in 1639. See W. M. Thorburn, "The Myth of Occam's Razor," *Mind,* XXVII (1927), 345 ff.

Another maxim of procedure dictated by the philosophical type of interest is that before one attempts to explain reported facts—here, for instance, prophetic visions, faith healings, stigmatizations, levitations, and other seemingly miraculous events connected with religion—one should first determine whether it is certain, or at least probable, that what is reported did occur as reported. That such extraordinary things did *not* really occur may not as Hume thought always be more probable than that the reports should really be trustworthy; for "extraordinary" or even "unique" does not mean "impossible." Nevertheless, before one is warranted in considering possible explanations of a reported event seemingly miraculous, the report must be one too circumstantial and too well-attested to be easily rejected as probably mistaken. On the other hand, *a priori* skepticism must not be allowed to beget the kind of credulity which acknowledges no limits to the possibility of accounting for reports of out-of-the-ordinary events by supposing the reports based on fraud, malobservation, stupidity, or wish to believe. The philosophical motive is neither the will to disbelieve nor the will to believe, but the will to get at the truth.

At all events, even if one judges that in a given case the report is dependable and that the framing of explanations is therefore in order, and finds that no natural explanation is available, even then the principle of logical frugality requires one not to postulate more than the minimum necessary to account for the facts. This means bearing in mind that there are doubtless many laws of nature not yet discovered, so that the true explanation of the as yet inexplicable facts may nevertheless be a perfectly natural one; also that, even if in the given case an agency "supernatural" in some sense really has to be postulated, that agency is not necessarily an omnipotent

God, but only an agency potent enough to cause the particular occurrence to be accounted for.

Again, the philosophical interest in religion does not assume that religion is necessarily a good thing; nor, as some assert, that it is a bad thing. Here too, the philosopher proposes to investigate first, and then to admit whatever the investigation reveals—both such positive and such negative values, personal or social, as religion verifiably turns out to have had or to have.

Finally, philosophical curiosity, as directed upon religion, demands that one examine such evidence as there may be, whether demonstrative or only probable, of the truth or falsity of the dogmas of the various religions.

Philosophical scrutiny of the whole field of religion, it should be clear, aims neither at destroying nor at vindicating nor even at altering anybody's religious beliefs; nor on the other hand at making skeptics religious. But it may turn out to have, in diverse cases, any one of those effects. Its desire is only to be informed, impartial, and intelligent about the whole matter of religion. To inform one's self, however, and to exercise intelligence, is a risky business—for skeptics, let it be noted, no less than for bigots. But then, risky too and probably more so, are conceit of ignorance and allegiance to bias.

## The Questions to Be Considered

In the course of the preceding description of the interest that animates the philosopher, mention was made of some of the questions about religion which it impels him to seek to answer. A somewhat fuller list of them will give a better idea of his task.

The central problem is that of the essential nature of religion; that is, what features, universally present in it, distinguish it from all other characteristic types of human experience—for instance, from morality simply, from science, from philosophy, from drama and poetry or more generally from art, and so on.

Of course, it may be objected that "religion," like any other word, means whatever one pleases to mean by it. But exercise of one's freedom, here as in one's choice of a wife and in other matters, has consequences which one is not free to avoid. Thus, for example, if by the word "religion" one chooses to denote Mohammedanism, Judaism, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and certain other faiths which one specifies, then one is no longer free to *define* "religion" as one pleases, but only in some manner that will fit alike all the faiths to which one has freely elected to apply the name. On the other hand, if what one freely chooses to start with is some particular definition of "religion"—that a religion is anything having all of certain characteristics *a, b, c, d,* which one specifies—then by this very choice one has given up one's liberty to apply the word to any faith one pleases; one can apply it thereafter only to faiths which, on empirical investigation, are found to have all the characteristics one specified. In short, one cannot both use one's freedom and still have it intact. If what one chooses is the characters a term shall *imply*, then one cannot *apply* it to things lacking any of those characters; and if, on the contrary, what one chooses to stipulate is the particular things to which the term shall *apply*, then one can no longer choose freely what characters one will *imply* by it, but choose only from such characters as happen to be common to all the things one stipulated the term should apply to.

In the case of "religion," however, as in that of most nouns in common use, the conventions which the existing language embodies concern the applications of the word much rather than its implications. That the word "dog," for example, applies to collies, to Pekingese, to Airdales, to terriers, and to certain other species of animals, is one of the firm conventions of existing language and is therefore certain; whereas a definite idea of the set of characters, common to all these animals, which differentiates them from those not called dogs, is something possessed by few persons other than zoologists. Similarly as a matter of the conventions of ordinary language, Mohammedanism is called a religion, and so are Judaism and the others mentioned or alluded to above. This fact constitutes the datum of the problem as to the essential nature of religion —the problem being then as to what set of characters, common to all those faiths, differentiates them from faiths that are not called religious and from any other thing to which the language definitely denies the name of religion. When a definition has thus been discovered that fits all the faiths one has listed, which usage firmly terms religions, and that fits none to which usage firmly denies the name, then consistency dictates that, in the case of any faith as to which usage is not firm but hesitates whether to call it a religion or not, that definition shall be the basis for decision.

The facts tacitly included in that datum, through examination of which a solution of the problem has to be sought, are of three main kinds. One, as indicated earlier, is the history of the religions both of primitive and of more or less civilized peoples; another is the reports of individual devotees of any of these religions concerning their own religious experiences; and a third is the reports of external observers, both psychologists and others, that have observed individuals and groups that were under the influence of religion, and have systematically studied the kinds of factors which tend to determine their religious experiences.

Another main problem, and one likely to be connected closely and perhaps essentially with the nature of religion, is that of the nature of the functions, both social and personal, which religion performs or is capable of performing; and of course also of the detrimental or possibly pernicious effects which religion may have had or can have.

Another matter of interest will be the kinds of implements —ideological, material, institutional, ritualistic or other—

which religion has employed to perform its functions or to maintain itself. Related more or less nearly to this is the question as to what main kinds of religion are to be distinguished, and the basis or bases on which the classification of them is to rest.

Still another question, which is of great importance, is whether or with what qualifications, belief—or equally, disbelief—is legitimate when evidence is absent or too scanty or ambiguous to establish clear probability or improbability. This question is evidently of profound interest if, or in so far as, the beliefs of the various religions are beliefs simply; that is, are matters not of knowledge or of demonstrable probability but purely of faith.

But among beliefs that either are intrinsically religious or that have been more or less closely associated with religion, there are a number which have been the subject of much discussion because it seemed possible to offer evidence, rational or empirical, to support or invalidate them. Examples of such beliefs would be that a God exists; that he is personal; that he created the universe; that some part of man's being, termed his soul, survives death, and that its life after death is of one or another of certain described kinds; that the existence of evil is compatible with that of a perfectly good and omnipotent God; that man possesses free will; that prayer is efficacious; and so on. These contentions are of great and widespread interest, and we shall want to examine critically the evidence commonly offered for or against them, and to consider the merits of possible alternative beliefs.

## Chapter 2

# NOTEWORTHY FEATURES OF SOME RELIGIONS

The task of identifying the characters which differentiate religion from the other typically human forms of experience is a very difficult one, which has been attempted by many writers. At the end of his book, *A Psychological Study of Religion,* J. H. Leuba lists forty-eight different definitions of religion, proposed by various authors; and the present writer's own notes include some seventy-five. The task has sometimes been asserted to be impossible because of the fact that religions are not static but—like languages, science, art, or other aspects of human life—are at all times in process of change whether gradual or relatively sudden. Yet, as some of the early philosophers of Greece perceived, change, in contrast to outright substitution or exchange, presupposes something constant which persists throughout the changes: the coin we give the baker does not change into or become a loaf of bread, but is exchanged for it; the loaf, on the other hand, fresh when we get it, gradually becomes stale. To say that the very same loaf we bought fresh has become stale is one thing; and it would be a very different thing to say that we have exchanged a fresh loaf for a stale one.

### The Problem of Defining Religion

To discern and formulate the core of identity in the various religions and in the changes each undergoes is no more impossible than it is to define science, art, play, morality, law, or other types of human activity; but in the case of religion, as in these, only a "systematically ambiguous" definition can be adequate; that is, a definition of which some of the terms, as in mathematical functions, are "variables," each capable of being given any one of a certain range of "values" while the relation between the variables remains the same.

In a later chapter we shall examine some of the more plausible definitions of religion which have been offered. The majority of attempts to define religion, however, seem to have been made in the light of only a very partial view of the great diversity of facts with which an adequate definition must be compatible. In some cases, the framer of a definition seems to have considered only the facts of his own religion, presumably dismissing the rest as only "superstitions"; or else he appears to have taken, as constituting the essence of religiousness, the particular feature that happens to be central in his own religious experiences. A survey of all the facts alluded to in the preceding chapter, for which a satisfactory definition of religion must allow room, obviously would be far too voluminous to introduce here. But the unconscious partiality with which we are likely to be approaching the problem of the nature of religion may be alleviated, and the confidence of our tacit assumptions on the subject salutarily shaken, if we attend to some facts commonly ignored.

## The Soul, Life After Death, Worship of a God

That man has a soul which survives the death of his body, and that the world is ruled by a divine creator, are beliefs which among us would widely be regarded as of the essence of religion. But Brinton, who states that "there is no one belief or set of beliefs which constitutes a religion," goes on to point out that "the Jewish doctrine of the Old Testament, the Roman religion of the time of Julius Caesar, and many others, have not admitted the existence of a soul, or the continuance of the individual life after death." To the Roman, death was eternal sleep. And as regards the idea of a divine government of the world, Brinton observes that it "is a thought rarely present in savage minds."[1]

It is also absent in some of the higher religions. Most of us, if asked what religion is, would probably propose some such answer as that it is essentially belief in and worship of a God or gods, together with related subsidiary beliefs and rules, and the practices, feelings, experiences, and conduct based thereon. But although this answer is plausible so long as only the theistic religions are in view, it leaves altogether out of account the fact that some religions exist, in which worship of or even belief in a deity has no part. It is true that a distinguished student of the history of religions, Max Müller, has spoken of five "broad foundations on which all religions are built up—the belief in a divine power, the acknowledgment of sin, the habit of prayer, the desire to offer sacrifices, and the hope of a future life."[2] But Rhys Davids, another eminent scholar in this field, has pointed out that none of these five things is found in original Buddhism; and therefore that Max Müller, who nevertheless himself calls it a religion, has here allowed the popular uncritical usage of this word to get the better of him.[3]

## Buddhism and Jainism

The Buddha and those to whom he spoke of course believed, like most of the people in India, in the existence of gods, demons, and other spiritual beings. But these, although normally invisible, were regarded by the Buddha as just another part of the population of the world, like the insects, the beasts, the fishes, or men. The gods were not objects of worship in the religion he founded. They played no part in it, except that they too, like men, were thought to be in need of salvation; and that the teachings of the Buddha, which define the path leading to it, were addressed to the gods as well as to men.

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[1] D. G. Brinton, *The Religions of Primitive Peoples* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), p. 28.

[2] Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Religion* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1873), p. 287.

[3] T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism, Its History and Literature* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), p. 5, n.

Because Buddhism, which is one of the noblest religions of mankind and one of those which have had the widest influence, is also the outstanding instance of a religion "atheistic" in the sense just indicated, it constitutes one of the most important touchstones by which to test the adequacy of definitions of religion that attempt to apply to all religions. For this reason, as well as on account of the intrinsic interest of its conception of salvation and of the problem of evil, the next chapter will be given to an exposition of its main features.

But it is not the only religion in which worship of a god has no part, nor belief that the world was divinely created. This is true also of Jainism, another reform movement, which arose in India a generation before Buddhism; and also of Confucianism. According to Mahavira, founder of Jainism, each individual completely makes his own destiny and has to achieve his own redemption. There are "gods"—spiritual beings higher than man in various degrees; but praying to them is useless. They cannot interfere with the lives of men; indeed, even if at a higher level, the gods are in the same case as man; they too are responsible for their own fates and have to work out their own salvations. "Divinity" means only the highest ideal man is able to conceive for the soul. For the Jaina, "god," as distinguished from the gods, means "the soul at its best, i.e., when, freed from all that is material, it has attained perfect knowledge, faith, power, and bliss." [4] In Jainism, "worship and reverence are given to all human souls worthy of it. . . . The worship is *impersonal*. It is the aggregate of the qualities that is worshipped rather than any particular individual."[5] The twenty-four Tirthankaras, i.e., "ford-finders," who are chief objects of such worship, were men, of whom Mahavira was the latest, "by whom was shown the broad fording-place of virtue . . . reaching which men overcome sorrow."[6] They were men who not only found and practised, but also preached and propounded, the way to perfection, freedom, and happiness.

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[4] Jagmanderlal Jaini, *Outlines of Jainism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. xxii.

## Comte's Religion of Humanity

Another example of nontheistic religion is the "Religion of Humanity" founded by the French philosopher Auguste Comte. It has never had many adherents, but at last advices its cult was still being practiced in a Church of Humanity in London, and by small groups of votaries in Paris and in Latin America. In this religion, the object of worship is Humanity: "Towards Humanity who is for us the only true Great Being, we, the conscious elements of whom she is composed, shall henceforth direct every aspect of our life, individual and collective. Our thoughts will be devoted to the knowledge of Humanity, our affections to her love, our actions to her service. Positivists then may, more truly than theological believers of whatever creed, regard life as a continuous and earnest act of worship."[7] The saints of Comte's "Positivist Calendar" are the greatest of the men who have worked for the progress and happiness of mankind. They have immortality in the grateful remembrance of them, and indeed of all worthy cooperators however humble, at regularly held commemorative services.[8]

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[6] Samantabhadra Acharya, *Brihat-Svayambhu-stotra*, p. 9; text quoted by Jaini, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[7] Auguste Comte, A *General View of Positivism*, trans. J. H. Bridges (Paris: The New Universal Library, 1908), p. 365.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 383.

## Contemporary Humanism

Another example of what some of its adherents would call a naturalistic or humanistic religion, and others a naturalistic substitute for religion, is contemporary Humanism. It negates the idea of divine creation or government of the world; declares that man is a part of "Nature," which it conceives as the material, public world; draws the conclusion that there can be no personal immortality; emphasizes science as the means by which man's lot can be improved; and conceives religiousness as self-dedication to such improvement, material and social.[9] The resemblance of Humanism in most of these respects to Comte's Religion of Humanity is obvious.

Like many other religions, Humanism too has its "devil," which is "Supernaturalism" and which it steadily attacks. Unfortunately, a definite idea of what Humanists mean by the term is hard to obtain from their expressions. By "Nature" they appear to mean whatever is discoverable by scientific study of the facts which sense perception presents. It is conceivable, however, that in this very manner "gods" or other intelligent beings, as imperceptible to our senses as are the subatomic particles or the magnetic fields of physics, but like these capable of being known to exist through characteristic perceptible effects, should some time be discovered. It is also conceivable that the empirical evidence—of which some already exists—that human consciousness survives death should one of these days become conclusive. Then gods and spirits would be as "natural" as electrons and protons. One therefore wonders what "the supernatural" ultimately means for Humanists, if not natural facts not yet discovered.

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[9] *A Humanist Manifesto* (Salt Lake City: The American Humanist Assoc., 1933); also e.g., R. W. Sellars, "Naturalistic Humanism," in *Religion in the Twentieth Century*, V. Ferm ed., (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), pp. 417-29.

## Impersonality of the Todas' Ritual Prayer

Another highly interesting and suggestive fact, which also traverses a widespread religious idea, is the peculiar form of prayer in the religion of the Todas. They are a small pastoral tribe of Southwestern India, which occupies an isolated rolling plateau in the Nilgiri hills. Their principal food is the milk of the buffalo cow, and their religious practices are closely connected with the buffaloes. Some of these are "ordinary buffaloes" and are tended and milked by the men and boys of the villages. But others are sacred buffaloes, of various degrees of sanctity. Their dairies are regarded as temples, their dairymen are priests, and the operations of their dairies have become a religious ritual. The priest prays in the morning when lighting the lamp and after milking; and in the evening likewise, and when shutting up the buffaloes for the night.[10]

Among us, prayer is ordinarily thought of as a petitive or other reverential form of address to some divine being. But the peculiar thing about the prayer in the religious ritual of the Todas is that it is not so addressed, but is impersonal. It consists of two parts. The first—the *kwarzam*—consists in mention of various valued or sacred objects or events, and in utterance with each of the word *idith*, which means "for the sake of." The second part is the prayer proper, consisting simply in *expression of the wish* that the buffaloes be preserved from various kinds of harm.

The prayer as a whole would then be as follows. The first part of it, the *kwarzam*, would have substantially this form: For the sake of the village of . . .; for the sake of the dairy of the village; for the sake of the lamp of the dairy; for the sake of a certain hill near the village; for the sake of a buffalo which once died on this hill; for the sake of the god Anto; etc. (many other things, among which occasionally a god, being mentioned in the same manner). Then would come the second part of the prayer, impersonal in form, which Rivers summarizes as follows: "May it be well with the buffaloes, may they not suffer from disease or die, may they be kept from poisonous animals and from wild beasts and from injury by flood or fire, may there be water and grass in plenty." [11]

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[10] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1906), pp. 38–39, 213.

Rivers is inclined to believe that the dairy prayers really are meant to invoke the aid of the gods in protecting the sacred buffaloes. But he adds: "it must be confessed that there is no actual evidence in the formulae of direct invocation of the gods. The name of no god is mentioned in the vocative form"; and the word *idith*, the common meaning of which is "for the sake of," is used in the prayers "in exactly the same way in the case of a god as in the case of a buffalo, a place, a dairy vessel, or other even meaner object." [12]

The impersonal form of these ritual prayers suggests an interesting conjecture concerning the psychological essence of prayer, which would be supported also by certain expressions of frequent use among us. It is that prayer is not essentially petition or even address, but only a particular instance of the general fact that intense psychological states—for example, pain, fear, relief, joy, or in the case of prayer, intense wish—tend to get vocal expression. The expression is usually inarticulate, as in the groan of pain, the cry of fear or of joy, the sigh of relief; but is occasionally verbalized, in such utterances as "How that hurts!" "How awful!" "At last!" "Wonderful!" Prayer would thus be essentially utterance—in its case, articulate—of a wish fervent enough to move one to utterance; and, together with this, a vague belief that the act of uttering the wish produces effects, like other bodily acts, and more specifically here, operates somehow to fulfil the wish. This seems to be the psychology also of certain common wish-utterances, such as "good morning," "farewell," "good luck," "get well soon"; and, of course, also of curses.

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[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 216 ff.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

Gods or other invisible beings would then be thought of, later, as agencies, more or less similar to men, imagined in order to account for the fact that the utterance of the wish is often followed by fulfilment—when, of course, it tends to be remembered, whereas in the contrary case it is easily forgotten. If, when a person says about another "I hope he chokes," it should often turn out that the other does choke, it would be tempting to construe the sequence as one of cause and effect; and, since the seemingly causative act would be an act of speech, it would be natural to suppose that the hidden medium of fulfilment was a personal being of some sort, as in the ordinary cases where the agency that makes speech effective is visible and is seen to *be* a person.

### Mana, the Mysterious Force

Yet another of the conceptions to be kept in view when attempting to frame a definition of religion is that of *mana*. This is the name the Melanesians give to a certain mysterious force with which their religion has much to do. Codrington, who lived among them from 1863 to 1887, described it as follows: "The religion of the Melanesians consists, as far as belief goes, in the persuasion that there is a supernatural power about belonging to the region of the unseen; and, as far as practice goes, in the use of means of getting this power turned to their own benefit. The notion of a Supreme Being is altogether foreign to them, or indeed of any being occupying a very elevated place in their world." They do believe in the existence of spirits, that is, "beings personal, intelligent, full of *mana*, with a certain bodily form which is visible but not fleshly like the bodies of men." These are of two sorts—the ghosts of men who have died, and spirits who have never been men and are of an order higher than mankind. Both are believed to be more or less concerned in the affairs of men, and are worshiped, prayed to, and sacrificed to. *Mana* is "a force altogether distinct from physical power, which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil, and which it is of the greatest advantage to possess or control . . . It is a power or influence, not physical, and in a way supernatural; but it shows itself in physical force, or in any kind of power or excellence which a man possesses. This Mana is not fixed in anything, and can be conveyed in almost anything; but spirits, whether disembodied souls or supernatural beings, have it and can impart it; and it essentially belongs to personal beings to originate it, though it may act through the medium of water, or a stone, or a bone. All Melanesian religion consists, in fact, in getting this Mana for one's self, or getting it used for one's benefit—all religion, that is, as far as religious practices go, prayers and sacrifices." *Mana* "is what works to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature." It is always *in* or *of* something —an object, person, place, ghost, etc.[13]

This account of *mana* brings to mind the virtues believed by some Christians to be possessed by holy water, the relics of saints, the water of the pool at Lourdes, and so on. Also, of course, the belief, often only half-serious but widespread even in Western countries, in lucky and unlucky things—a rabbit's foot, a horseshoe, a piece of hangman's rope, the number 13, mascots, and so on; and the notion of *mana* makes one think also of the common expression "a magnetic personality." The idea of some mysterious virtue or force, essentially similar to the *mana* of the Melanesians, is to be found among many other peoples. It has been current among American Indians. The Algonkins call it *manitou;* the Sioux,

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[13] R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1891), pp. 118-19 ff., n.

*wakonda;* the Hurons, *orenda;* the Iroquois, *oki;* the African pygmies, *oudah;* the Bantu, *mulungu;* and so on.[14]

The essential feature in the idea of *mana* and in others more or less closely similar to it would seem to be recognition of the fact that "the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley"; that is, that the success or failure of man's plans and efforts, his prosperity or adversity, his health, sickness, accidents, or vigor depend in part on factors that are beyond his capacities to foresee, to observe, or to command through exertion of his natural powers. Persons of scientific habits of mind take it for granted that these factors are always of the same human and other natural kinds as those determinants of destiny which they are able to observe. This, however, is an article of scientific faith rather than a known fact. The more common faith has been that they are sometimes of a different kind.

On the other hand, the opinion occasionally met with that some peoples of lowly culture have no conception of mechanical causation but regard every material object as animated, so that their view is the polar opposite of that of naturalism, does not seem to accord with the facts. Hose, in commenting upon it, states that this is certainly not true about any of the peoples of Borneo. Among them, "if, for instance, a trap fails to work owing to its faulty construction, the trapper treats it purely as a mechanical contrivance, and proceeds to discover and rectify the faulty part. He is under no illusions as to possible sentient 'devils' residing in the trap," [15] nor does he ascribe the trap's malfunction to magical influence employed by his enemies.

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[14] A. O. Lovejoy, "The Fundamental Concept of the Primitive Philosophy," *The Monist,* XVI (1906), 357-82; R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (London: Methuen Co., Ltd., 1909), chap. iv; Irving King, *The Development of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1910), chap. vi.

[15] Charles Hose, *Natural Man, A Record from Borneo* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1926), p. 191.

## Sacred Ceremonies of Australian Tribes

In a sampling of features of various religions, that need to be kept in mind when seeking for the common denominator of all, it is appropriate to consider also the beliefs and practices of some of the lowest savages that have been adequately studied. In culture at this elementary level, religion is not differentiated from the other aspects of the life of the group. Rather, the traditional beliefs and customs of the tribe are at once its religion, its laws, and its science; and the education of its members consists in participation in its practical arts and in its sacred ceremonies.

For the purpose of studying religion at this primitive level, the tribes of Australia, which ethnographers had opportunity to observe before their culture had been affected by contact with settlers and missionaries, are suitable material. How primitive were their feelings, as well as their customs, is made evident by the following anecdote mentioned by Brinton. At a frontier station, "the white family employed a native girl named Mattie about fifteen years old. She had a baby, which one day disappeared. On inquiry she stated that her mother had said that she was too young to take care of a baby, and had therefore cooked and eaten it with some of her cronies. Mattie cried in telling this. Because her baby had been killed? Oh no! but because her mother had given her none of the tidbits, but only the bones to pick!" [16]

Considerable differences exist between the various tribes, but the following beliefs and customs may be taken as typical. One of them is totemism. Spencer and Gillen, in their now classic work on *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, state that "every individual . . . is born into some totem—that is, he or she belongs to a group of persons each of whom bears the name of, and is especially associated with, some natural object." The latter is usually an animal or plant, but wind, sun, water, and many other kinds of things are also capable of being totem objects.[17] The relationship between an individual and his totem is believed by the natives to have originated in a dim past, the *Alcheringa,* in which existed beings very closely related to animals or plants—beings that somehow were at once men and kangaroos, or men and witchetty grubs; human honey-ants, human Hakea-flowers, etc. Each of these Alcheringa beings "carried about some sacred object, a stick or stone called Churinga, with which was associated their spirit part"—the latter remaining with the Churinga when they died. Every individual is believed to be the reincarnation of an Alcheringa being—the sense in which he is so depending on the supposition of a rather complicated process of spirit localization, spirit issuance, and spirit splitting or doubling.[18] After the death of the Alcheringa beings, however, their spirits, and spirits issued from them called *Arumburinga,* have continued to exist. They are the *Iruntarinia,* which are organized in totemic groups like men, but are invisible except to the medicine men and to a few privileged persons. They are supposed to keep a general watch, more or less benevolent, over their human representatives, but must not be offended.[19]

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[16] Brinton, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

There are two chief kinds of ceremonies—the *Intichiuma* and the initiation ceremonies. The first are sacred ceremonies associated with the totems. Their object is to increase the supply of the totem animal or plant. Ritual eating of it is in some cases a part of the ceremony.[20]

The initiation ceremonies are elaborate and vary more or less from group to group. In some tribes they extend over many years, from the age of 10 or 20 to 25 or even later. "Every Australian native, so far as is known, has in the normal condition of the tribe to pass through certain ceremonies of initiation before he is admitted to the secrets of the tribe, and is regarded as a fully developed member of it." Among the Arunta they are the following four: Painting and throwing the boy up in the air; Circumcision; Subincision; and the Fire ceremony.[21]

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[17] Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1899), chap. iv.

[18] *Ibid.,* pp. 512–14.

[19] *Ibid.,* pp. 514 ff.

[20] *Ibid.,* chap. vi.

In the course of the first, the boys are told that it promotes their growth to manhood, and are instructed not to play or camp henceforth with the women or girls, but with the men. The proceedings incident to the second extend over several days and are such as "to impress him strongly with a feeling of the deep importance of compliance with tribal rules, and further still with a strong sense of the superiority of the older men, who know, and are familiar with, all the mysterious rites." Secrecy concerning what he is about to learn of these is stringently enjoined on him. Some of the rites are symbolic enactments of supposed episodes in the lives of his Alcheringa ancestors, and are explained to him.[22] The ceremonies connected with subincision are held some weeks later. They are of the same general character, intended to initiate the young man further into the secret mysteries of the tribe, to bring him under the control of the old men, and to teach him self-restraint and hardihood. This is the function also of the Fire ceremonies, which last many weeks.[23] They relate to the totems, and are supposed to impart strength, courage, and wisdom. They finally make the young man who goes through them a perfectly developed member of the tribe. There are also some initiation ceremonies for girls, but many of the mysteries revealed to the boys, and most of the sacred objects, are strictly kept from women.

The Intichiuma and initiation ceremonies and the beliefs taught in them evidently make for solidarity among the members of the tribe, in respects connected or believed by the natives to be connected with its welfare. For this obviously depends, on the one hand, on the mutual relations of the members and, on the other, on the relation of their activities to nature, as source of the food, the scarce water, and the crude implements which constitute the whole of the material needs of these naked primitives. In respect to some of the services rendered or fancied to be rendered by their beliefs and ceremonies, these are religious in the same sense, into which we shall eventually inquire, as that in which beliefs and ceremonies of higher religions are so.

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[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 223, 226 ff.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 271–72 ff.

## Chapter 3

# A NONTHEISTIC MAJOR RELIGION: BUDDHISM

There are several reasons for giving a chapter entirely to Buddhism when one prepares to try to reach an inclusive conception of the nature of religion. One of them is that Buddhism is markedly different in important respects from Christianity, Judaism, Mohammedanism, or any of the other religions about which the majority of probable readers of this book are likely to know much. Yet, in respect to nobility of teachings, capacity to bring peace of soul to its devotees, and to foster good will and peace among men, it easily ranks with any of these religions and perhaps surpasses some of them. Again, considering the number of its adherents, Buddhism is one of the major religions of mankind. In India, where it originated, it is still the religion of some of the Northern tribes. It is the common religion in Ceylon, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Indochina. In China, more than half the population are reckoned as Buddhists. Buddhism reached Korea, and from there Japan, where it is widespread although it is no longer the established religion there. In the form of Lamaism, it is the religion of Thibet. It is the religion of the Mongolian tribes of central Asia, and reaches to the very north of Siberia and even into Lapland. Altogether, some 500 million persons regard themselves as Buddhists. And, much to the credit of Buddhism, "its transplanting to new lands has been accomplished never through conquest or through migration but solely by the spread of ideas." [1]

It is true that in its extensive pilgrimage, many of the preexisting beliefs of the peoples among whom it spread have been incorporated, often inconsistently, into the Buddhism adopted—this having been the easier because of the tolerance or, one can say even, the interest in and sympathy with other religions, which has been characteristic of Buddhism, and which has given it the great adaptability manifest throughout its history. But those who on that account would deny that many of the peoples said to be Buddhists are really so, would then have also to deny, on analogous grounds, that some of the peoples said to have embraced Christianity—for example, many of the Indians of Latin America—are really Christians; for their religion is in fact often a mixture of Christian and indigenous beliefs and practices. Frances Toor, after describing the general pattern of Catholic agricultural ceremonies in Mexico, writes that "by scratching the surface a little, much paganism can be discovered." She states that although the Mayas of X-Cacal and Chan Kom "believe in God and the saints, the Yuntzilob (ancient Maya deities) are much closer to them, because it is they who have the power to make the fields fertile, to control the rains and winds, the animals and the birds. So the ceremonies are all in their honor." [2] Notwithstanding the adaptations and alterations which Buddhism has undergone in the lands to which it has spread, it retains in most of them certain characteristics, which spring from the essence of the teachings of its founder and which define its unity and self-identity.[3]

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[1] J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 719.

### The Advent of Buddhism

Just as "Christ" is not a proper name but a title meaning "Anointed," and "the Christ"—the Anointed One—is therefore the appropriate substantive form, so "Buddha" means Enlightened, and "the Buddha"—the Enlightened One—is the form we should use when employing the word to denote the founder of Buddhism. His given name was Siddhattha—"he who attains his aim"—and his family name Gotama. He was born probably about 563 B.C. in the southern part of what is now Nepal, at Kapilavastu, the capital where his father reigned as rajah of the Sakya clan. The name, Sakyamuni, by which the Buddha is often referred to, means The Sage of the Sakyas. He lived past the age of eighty, dying about 483 B.C.

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[2] Frances Toor, A *Treasury of Mexican Folkways* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1947), pp. 28–29 ff.

[3] Pratt, *op. cit.*, pp. 709–22, describes particularly those common to the Hinayana and the Mahayana forms of Buddhism.

As in the case of founders of other great religions, legends eventually grew up of marvellous things—including his having been immaculately conceived—connected with his birth; and of subsequent events in his career—including his having been tempted by the devil who, after Gotama had achieved enlightenment, urged him to enjoy the spiritual liberation he had won, instead of attempting to teach men, too dull to understand, the way by which they also could reach it. An early story, which translates into objective and dramatic events what doubtless was in fact a train of reflections, is to the effect that before Gotama's birth it had been prophesied that either he would become a great king or else a wandering monk who would be a savior of mankind; and that the latter would occur if he saw four signs: a decrepit old man, a diseased man, a dead man, and a monk. The story goes that his father, who wanted him to become a great monarch, took precautions to prevent his seeing these four signs, and yet that on successive occasions he did see them. The sight of them, which impressed him with the misery inseparable from life and the transitoriness of all earthly things, and brought the idea of a search for value independent of these, is said to have been what determined him at the age of twenty-nine to give up his palace, possessions, and family life, and to embrace the life of a wandering ascetic so as to devote himself wholly to the search for a solution of the problem of human suffering.

Gotama then sought out various philosophical teachers, but found no solution of his problem with any of them. He eventually came to the deer park near Benares, where, with five other recluses, he practiced for some time the most rigorous asceticism under the belief that mortification of the body would result in spiritual illumination. But, having one day fainted from fasting, he concluded that this method was barren and resumed the life of an ordinary recluse. Eventually, in prolonged deep meditation, he attained spiritual enlightment—became Buddha—and gained insight into the solution of the problem of human suffering. The peepul tree under which he was sitting at the time became known as the Bo or Bodhi tree—the tree of enlightenment. At Anuradhapura in Ceylon, there is a tree still living, which is said to have grown from a branch of the original tree brought there by the daughter of the Buddhist emperor Asoka of the third century B.C. Gotama thereafter wandered for the rest of his life from place to place, teaching all who would hear the way of salvation he had discovered.

## The Buddha's First Sermon

The Buddha's first converts were the five recluses in whose company he had previously practiced asceticism, and who, when he gave up his extreme austerities, had looked down upon him as having returned to what they regarded as a life of ease. His address to them is sometimes referred to as "The Sermon at Benares," but Rhys Davids translates its title in the Buddhist scriptures by the words "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness." It sets forth the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths, and embodies the essence of the Buddha's insight. Rhys Davids remarks that "never in the history of the world had a scheme of salvation been put forth so simple in its nature, so free from any superhuman agency, so independent of, so even antagonistic to the belief in a soul, the belief in God, and the hope for a future life"; and he refers to the promulgation of it by the Buddha as "a turning point in the religious history of man." [4] Omitting the repetitions, so common in Buddhist texts, the essential parts of that first discourse of Gotama after he had become Buddha are as follows: [5]

> There are two extremes, O Bhikkhus (i.e., recluses), which the man who has given up the world ought not to follow—the habitual practice, on the one hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon the passions, and especially of sensuality —a low and pagan way (of seeking satisfaction), unworthy, unprofitable, and fit only for the worldly-minded—and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of asceticism (or self-mortification), which is painful, unworthy, and unprofitable.
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> There is a middle path, O Bhikkhus, avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the Tathagata (i.e., the Perfect One, The Buddha)—a path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana!
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> What is that middle path O Bhikkhus . . .? Verily! it is this noble eightfold path; that is to say:
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> Right views; right aspirations; right speech; right conduct; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; and right contemplation . . .
>
> Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning suffering.
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> Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant; and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief, the five aggregates which spring from attachment (the conditions of individuality and their cause) are painful . . .
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> Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering.

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[4] "Buddhist Suttas," *Sacred Books of the East,* trans. T. W. Rhys Davids (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1881), p. 142.

[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 146 ff.

> Verily, it is that thirst (or craving), causing the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight, seeking satisfaction now here, now there—that is to say, the craving for the gratification of the passions, or the craving for a (future) life, or the craving for success (in this present life) . . .
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> Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of suffering.
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> Verily, it is the destruction, in which no passion remains, of this very thirst; the laying aside of, the getting rid of, the being free from, the harboring no longer of this thirst.
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> Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the way which leads to the destruction of sorrow. Verily! it is this noble eightfold path; that is to say:
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> Right views; right aspirations; etc.

## Suffering and the Origin of Suffering

To make fully clear the meaning of the Buddha's Sermon at Benares, it is necessary to enlarge somewhat on his succinct statement of the Four Noble Truths and to introduce, as constituting their context, certain other parts of his doctrine barely alluded to in the Sermon.

It will be recalled that what drove Gotama to embrace the life of a recluse was the keenness of his realization that suffering is an inevitable part of the natural life of man, and his desire to discover how to do away with it. This is the central problem to which the Buddha's teaching is addressed. Pessimism is its premise, in the sense that it does not gloss over or ignore or minimize the pain and sorrow inherent in life, but acknowledges it, faces it frankly, and attempts to deal with it in a manner radical in the strict sense of extirpating its roots. Buddhism, however, is not pessimistic in the sense of denying that there are good things and joy too in life. But these are no problem. It is pain only which is a problem—the pain of losing or missing these good things, the pains of disease and decay, and all the others alluded to in the statement of the first Noble Truth.

In Rome centuries later, the Stoic Epictetus focused on the same fact in the words: "he who fails of the object of his desire is disappointed, and he who incurs the object of his aversion is wretched." [6] To the same general effect is Schopenhauer's still later insistence that even when desire is fulfilled the happiness this gives is but brief and is soon replaced by the goad of new unfulfilled desires; and further that, were it not that we spontaneously avert our attention from the wretched past moments of our own lives—from the destitute, the crippled, and the sick, and from the miserable victims of human callousness, stupidity, tyranny, greed, and cruelty—were it not for this, it would become glaringly evident to us that, in the life of mankind, suffering and sorrow vastly outweigh happiness.

Even if Schopenhauer paints the picture perhaps darker than it really is, there can be no doubt that the extent of suffering in the world is immense. This is the fact on which the first Noble Truth centers attention.

The craving or thirst, to which the second Noble Truth ascribes the origin of suffering, does not mean only the passionate desires, attachments, and aversions, whose frustration is in itself painful, and which commonly prompt besides to actions causative of suffering. It means in addition something more fundamental, which is much the same as what Schopenhauer some two thousand years later called the "will to live." It is to this that the second Noble Truth ascribes the "renewal of existence," that is, the return of each man to earth again and again to live as a person—which means as a being prey to the lusts of the flesh, to the lust of life, and to the sorrows which inevitably go therewith. Indeed, the origin of suffering is traced by Buddhism even farther back, to the *blindness* of that craving or will to live—to the *ignorance* in which it is, of the far-reaching consequences of its own voraciousness.

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[6] *The Moral Discourses of Epictetus*, trans. Elizabeth Carter (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1909), Vol. II; *Encheiridion*, Sec. II, p. 188.

## Impermanence, Individuality, and Rebirth

At this point, it is necessary to notice, as context of the Four Noble Truths, certain doctrines on which the Buddha laid great stress. One of these is that nothing whatever that exists is permanent; that everything existent—whether mineral, vegetable, animal, human or divine, and whether material, mental, or physical—is in process of change. Whatever has a beginning in time has an end in time. Every substance is an aggregate of parts, states, or properties—some always going and others coming. The "sameness" of anything is thus of the merely apparent kind possessed by a heap of bricks to which some are constantly being added and some taken away.

This holds of man as well as of everything else. Not only his body, but also what he calls his mind or soul, is an aggregate of parts, qualities, and capacities; and these are always changing, some slowly and others rapidly. This means that in the individual there is no persistent, changeless, permanently abiding *ego*. On this nonexistence of any ego (*an-atta*), the Buddha insists again and again, holding that the illusory belief in a changelessly enduring soul fosters selfishness, pride, greed, and other evil dispositions.

Another belief, not peculiar to Buddhism but which at first seems paradoxically inconsistent with the buddhistic doctrine of absence of a permanent ego, is that of the "renewal of existence" referred to in the second Noble Truth—the belief, namely, that each man lives on earth not once only but again and again, his personal equipment and his external lot in each succeeding life being determined by his acts, attitudes, thoughts, and strivings in the preceding ones. How, one may well ask, is it possible to be reborn if there is no enduring soul or spirit to be reborn.

The solution of the paradox is furnished by the role of what is called "Karma" in the buddhistic analysis of individuality. "Karma" is a term which means action, but which in the present connection means more specifically the law of cause and effect as applying to man's physical and psychological conduct. The doctrine of Karma is the belief that an individual's every act whether objective or subjective—every deed, volition, thought, feeling, or effort—causes changes directly or indirectly in the individual's character or capacities, in his body, his environment, his situation in the world—some of these effects occurring in his present life but others in subsequent lives; and that, conversely, what he and his fortunes now are is the result of what he has done or failed to do, of his thoughts, attitudes, and strivings, earlier in this life or in preceding lives. The Karma doctrine is thus that "as a man sows, so shall he also reap"—that each man was and now continues to be the architect both of himself and of his destiny.

The relation between the man who sows in one life and the man who reaps in a later one is of essentially the same kind as that between the child and the adult. The two are the "same" person not in the sense that any item, physical or mental, in the infant's makeup has persisted unchanged and is identically present in the mature man, but only in the sense that the former has changed into the latter by a gradual transformation from hour to hour, day to day, year to year. The sameness of the two is thus sameness in the sense only of continuousness of becoming. The Buddhist sage Nagasena, in his conversations with King Milinda, conveys the idea by saying that the individual is "the same" at different times only in the sense in which the flame of a candle which burns throughout the night can be said to be the same flame in the last as in the first hour. Again, the unity of an individual in time is compared to the unity in space of the cable that reaches from ship to shore. Although the cable is composed only of short fibers, none extending through its whole length, the fact that they overlap and are intertwined suffices to beget practical continuity. Again, just as "chariot" is but the collective name for wheels, axle, body, and other parts in a certain relation to one another—not the name of something additional to all of these and "having" them—so "self" is but the name of a complex of sensations, thoughts, feelings, habits, capacities, and so on, which "has" them only in the sense in which a whole has its parts.

The significance of the present life of the "self" so conceived and of its preceding and succeeding lives is the contribution each makes, through Karma, to the individual's moral, intellectual and spiritual *growth*, which eventually will culminate in emancipation from the realm of becomings. Karma is therefore to be regarded not essentially as reward and punishment, but as natural and spiritually educational consequence; just as being burned is not a punishment for touching a hot stove but a natural and educational consequence of having done so. It is true enough that one does not "learn" moral lessons from the consequences of past acts that one does not remember; but moral improvement nevertheless can result from those acts if, as the Karma doctrine assumes, they cause one, for example, to land eventually in a situation of the kind which compels or fosters development of the particular virtue, lack of which was responsible for one's having acted as he did.

## The Eradication of Suffering

The root of suffering is *tanha*—passion, attachment, coveting, craving; and the third Noble Truth declares that suffering can ultimately be destroyed only by destroying that root. Does this mean that all desire is then to be condemned? This question is answered in the negative by Pratt among others, who shows that Gotama distinguished between good and bad desires, and did so in terms of their happy or painful nature and of that of their consequences.[7] There is an obviously great difference, for example, between possessive, clinging, greedy love, and disinterested, generous, kindly love. The first is a passion and easily torments both its subject and its object. The second, on the contrary, is a gentle impulse, benevolent, serene, and beneficent. The first enslaves; the second, because its essence is simply to do devotedly for others what one can —to give, not invest—leaves free both the giver and the recipient.

Pratt, in his discussion of the passages concerning desire in the Buddhist scriptures, remarks that the distinction Gotama draws between good and evil desires seems related to the distinction, made ages later in the first sentence of Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, between things that are in our power and things that are not in our power—the first being the ways in which we comport ourselves inwardly toward the second; that is, toward the external events with which life confronts us. The distinction clearly harmonizes with the *inwardness* which Pratt justly regards as one of the essential characteristics of Buddhism: the profound conviction that subjective states—attitudes, feelings, thoughts, and impulses—are important in themselves, and vastly more important than are objective things. The latter have importance only if, and only to the extent that, we permit them to affect our state of mind. The statement in one of the Buddhist scriptures that "whatever is transient is full of sorrow" [8] is true enough, but only because, or if, one clings to what passes. And desire can be frustrated only if it is desire *for external results* from one's acts, not if it is desire simply *to try* for external results with such skill and powers—great, modest, or small—as one happens actually to have. Merely to act on *this* desire automatically fulfils it; for where desire is specifically desire to try, trying constitutes succeeding. And of course, considering external results, it is always one's *trying*, and nothing but one's *trying*,

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[7] Pratt, *op. cit.*, chap. ii.

[8] Quoted by Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 22, n.

which accomplishes those which circumstances happened to permit. So nothing outer is lost that was possible, but inner peace is gained, if one confines his desires to trying—trying for such outer results as he believes would be good.

## The Path and the Fetters

The fourth of the Noble Truths describes the path which leads to the eradication of suffering. The eight steps of this path can be divided into three groups. The first two, Right Views and Right Aspirations, constitute *wisdom*. The next three, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, together comprise *morality*. The last three, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Contemplation, are the *discipline of the mind*. What is more specifically meant by each of these eight things may be gathered from various passages of the scriptures which describe it in detail.[9]

1. Right views or right understanding means first of all knowledge and understanding of the four Noble Truths and of the three characteristics, *anicca, dukkha, anatta*; that is, that whatever exists is transient, is subject to suffering, and is without a permanent Ego.

Right understanding further includes knowledge of what actions are meritorious and demeritorious. The demeritorious kinds of bodily action are killing, stealing, and unlawful sexual intercourse; the demeritorious kinds of verbal action are lying, tale-bearing, harsh language, and frivolous talk; and the mental are covetousness, ill will, and error. The meritorious kinds of action are the opposites of these.

Right understanding, moreover—and the same is true of the other seven steps of the Eightfold path—is of two kinds, mundane or ultramundane, or we might say, secular or monastic, according as it is used for guidance as to what yields good worldly fruits instead of bad, or is used for guidance directly to the attaining of liberation from the necessity of rebirth in the world of becomings.

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[9] These passages, and others enlarging upon the meaning of the other three Noble Truths, have been collected in a useful pamphlet, *The Word of the Buddha*, by the Ven. Nyanatiloka (Colombo, Ceylon: Maha-Bodhi Press, 1927). The account of the eight steps, given in the text, is based on this pamphlet.

2. Right aspirations or right mindedness means the turning of the mind to purposes consistent with right understanding. The devoting of the mental activities to worldly aims free from lust, ill will, and cruelty is mundane right mindedness; on the other hand, thinking devoted to the gaining of salvation from life in the world of birth and death is ultramundane right mindedness.

3. Right speech is speech free from lying, reliable, devoted to the truth; free from tale-bearing, seeking to bring concord; free from harsh language, gentle, courteous, kindly; free from vain talk, relevant, timely. This is right speech on mundane matters; and speech likewise true, moderate, appropriate, and reasonable, concerning the path which leads to liberation, is right speech of the ultramundane kind.

4. Right conduct is conduct which avoids killing, stealing, and unlawful sexual intercourse, that is, intercourse "with such persons as are still under the protection of father, mother, brother, sister or relatives," and with "married women, . . . female convicts, . . . engaged girls." This is mundane right conduct; and ultramundane right conduct is the act of repudiating and freeing one's self from any impulse to wrong conduct.

5. Right livelihood is any way of making a living not requiring deceit, treachery, soothsaying, trickery, usury. Five trades are explicitly condemned as wrong ways of livelihood: trade in arms, in living beings, in flesh, in intoxicating drinks, and in poison. Living in accordance with these injunctions is mundane right living; and, as before, the abhorring and eradicating of impulses to wrong living is ultramundane right living.

6. Right effort is concerned with the discipline of the mind, which is basic to morality and to wisdom. Right effort is fourfold: effort to *avoid* attachment to the objects perceived by the senses and thus avoid the evils which would arise from such attachment; effort to *overcome* thoughts that have already arisen, of lust, ill will, grief, or other evil thoughts; effort to *develop* meritorious mental conditions, attitudes, and practices that have not already arisen; and effort to *maintain* these once they have arisen.

7. Right mindfulness or attentiveness is fourfold also, being attentiveness to the body, the feelings, the mind, and the phenomena. The first is attentiveness to the nature of the body, to its behavior and its ordinarily automatic and unconscious or subconscious processes, such as, in particular, breathing in and out, retaining the breath, etc.; such attentiveness leading to mastery of the body and to the awakening of various psychical powers, such as clairvoyance, knowledge of the thoughts and destinies of other persons, remembrance of one's previous births.

The second kind of right mindfulness is attentiveness to one's feelings. It means that these, instead of possessing and swaying one as they do when attention is on their objects, are themselves made objects of attention and thereby of possible control. The similarity is obvious between this and Spinoza's teachings centuries later about human bondage to the passions and the means of liberation from them.

The third kind of right mindfulness is attentiveness to the mind itself, that is, to its dispositions, traits, habits: "the disciple knows the greedy mind as greedy, and the not-greedy mind as not greedy; the angry mind as angry . . .; the deluded mind as deluded . . .; the scattered mind as scattered"; etc.

Fourthly, by attentiveness to the phenomena seems to be meant a variety of things perhaps describable comprehensively as attentiveness to the laws of mind—to the causes and effects of the arising of mental states of the various kinds.

8. The eighth step of the path is right contemplation or concentration, which means one-pointedness of mind—unwavering fixation of attention on a single object—in so far as deliberate and voluntary; whereas wrong concentration is involuntary, passive, due to the capture of attention by the interestingness of objects of the senses. The objects of right concentration are the four fundamentals of right attentiveness. It leads to four degrees or kinds of trance, free from lust, ill will, dulness, restlessness, worry, and doubts; pervaded by happiness, bringing tranquillity, equanimity, and insight; and culminating in the peace and liberation termed Nirvana.

There are ten fetters, by which beings are bound to the wheel of personal existence, and which have to be broken as one progresses on the Noble Eightfold Path. These ten fetters are: (1) the illusion of self, i.e., that it is an unchanging substance; (2) skepticism or doubt of the Teacher, the doctrine, the path, the law of cause and effect (Karma); (3) belief that ritual and good works are sufficient for attainment of liberation; (4) sensuality, attachment to bodily pleasures; (5) ill will, which is rooted in belief of separateness from others; (6) craving for life in the worlds of form, e.g., on earth; (7) craving for life in a heavenly world; (8) pride; (9) self-righteousness; (10) ignorance.[10]

## Nirvana

The man who has broken the ten fetters and progressed to the end of the Noble Eightfold Path is called an *Arhat*, and the inner state he has achieved is called Nirvana. This word means a going out, an extinguishing—specifically of the "three fires" of lust or craving for personal existence, ill will, and ignorance or delusion. In the *Samyutta Nikaya*, a recluse is represented as asking Sariputtha, an eminent disciple of the

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[10] T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism, Its History and Literature* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), pp. 141 ff.

Buddha, what Nirvana is, and he answers: "The annihilation of desire, the annihilation of hatred, the annihilaton of error —this, friend, is what is called Nirvana." Again, in the *Maha Parinibbana Sutta*, we read: "Through the rejection of covetousness, of ill will, and of all error, thou shalt attain Nirvana." The word thus designates the state of inner serenity and felicity—the peace which passes understanding—that results from extirpation of the roots out of which comes all suffering. Attainment of Nirvana implies liberation from the necessity of being reborn and of enduring again the tribulations which go with separate life. This, to men engrossed in worldly matters, may seem a merely negative culmination, for they see what is abandoned but not what is reached. Schopenhauer, in his own terminology at the end of his *World as Will and Idea*, puts the situation in focus when, describing the state attained through renunciation of the Will, he writes: "We freely acknowledge that what remains after the entire abolition of will is, for those who are still full of will certainly nothing; but conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and has denied itself, this our world, which is so real, with all its suns and milky ways—is nothing." The insight reached intellectually by Schopenhauer here, and before him in actual experience by the Buddha, by Plotinus, and by the great mystics of the various religions, is that there is a state of being, attainable by man and variously called Nirvana, cosmic consciousness, the kingdom of heaven within the soul, the peace that passeth understanding, union with God, the *summum bonum*, the mystical ecstasy, etc., which is so absolutely satisfying, self-sufficing, perfect, serene, and blissful, that by comparison with it nothing this world has to offer—whether possessions, position, power, wealth, beauty, enjoyment, fame, or anything else—has any importance; all such things then being seen to be but childish toys and games, which can have a temporary role for growth, but are not the ultimate goal.

Salvation, in Buddhism, thus means ultimate liberation from the necessity of suffering; it is attainment of the kind of supremely valuable inner state already described; through a process of psychological transformation; not coming as a gift from the Buddha or the gods but to be effected by one's own efforts; the Buddha having only discovered and taught the method by which it can be accomplished.

The one-pointedness and practical character of the Buddha's teaching, and his consequent refusal to engage in useless speculations, are well illustrated by the answer, in the *Majjhima Nikaya*, which he made to a man who had asked him whether one who has attained Nirvana exists or does not exist after death. In substance, the answer was this: Whether one who has attained Nirvana does or does not exist after death, one thing remains, namely, that birth, decrepitude, death, and suffering are facts; and, concerning them, I have given out teachings that point out the origin, the cause, and the cessation of suffering, and the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. I have not declared whether one who attains Nirvana does or does not exist after death, because this has no relevance to the basis of the doctrine, and does not lead to the absence of passion, to peace, to spiritual insight, to supreme wisdom, to Nirvana.

Nonetheless, the question has continued since then to occupy Buddhist philosophers and Western students of Buddhism, some maintaining that the "going out," which "Nirvana" means, is to be understood as total and absolute extinction of every part of a man's being; whereas others maintain that there is an ultrapersonal, ultratemporal constituent in man's being, to which the categories of "continuing to exist" and "not continuing to exist" are alike incongruous, and which is not affected by the final depersonalization resulting from the extinction of craving, ill will, and ignorance. In support of this view may be quoted the following passage from the *Udana*:

> Verily, there is a realm, where there is neither the solid, nor the fluid, neither heat nor motion, neither this world nor any other world, neither sun nor moon.
>
> This I call neither arising nor passing away, neither standing still, nor being born, nor dying. There is neither foothold, nor development, nor any basis. This is the end of suffering.
>
> There is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed. If there were not this Unborn, this Unoriginated, this Uncreated, this Unformed, escape from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed, would not be possible.
>
> But since there is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed, therefore is escape possible from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed.[11]

What this chapter has attempted to describe is the teachings of the Buddha as reported by his earlier disciples. In later times, and as Buddhism spread, many alterations and changes of emphasis occurred in it. For one thing, the example of the Buddha's own life, which, out of compassion for other men, he devoted to teaching them how to attain salvation, and his injunctions to the monks to go everywhere and carry on this teaching, were clearly seen to be as intrinsic a part of his message as were the doctrines he set forth. This led to emphasis on the *Bodhisattva* as ideal—the man who, during a long succession of lives, imitates the Buddha's self-dedication to the task of aiding others. But this noble ideal, greatly stressed and speculatively much-embroidered in Mahayana Buddhism, was already present in the earlier Buddhism, with its stories of the Buddha's many deeds of compassion in his earlier incarnations.

In the author's opinion, it is a mistake to contrast the Bodhisattva with the *Arhat*—the saint who has succeeded in completely extinguishing the three fires of craving, ill will, and ignorance, i.e., in attaining Nirvana. For whereas the idea of the Bodhisattva is an ideal in the sense of a picture of the noblest way to live life, the idea of the Arhat is not the picture of a different and less ideal way to live it. Arhatship, rather, is an ideal in the quite different sense of being the inner state aimed at in the long psychological process of breaking the ten fetters and climbing the noble eightfold path. And, that a man who has succeeded in this then turns away from the woes of mankind for selfish enjoyment of his own bliss, does not at all necessarily follow. It did not follow in the case of the Buddha, who instead dedicated to the salvation of others the more than forty years of his life after he had reached full enlightenment. Nor did it follow in the case of the Arhats among his disciples, who imitated his example in this. Extinction of *craving*, i.e., of personal desire for life, does not in itself entail extinction of all *doing*, but only of such doing as was required for satisfaction of such desire. He who no longer craves anything still can be moved to act, but then, as perfect servant, not by desires within him, but only and wholly by the needs of others. He does not *crave* to help them; rather, their need automatically sets in motion the "compassion-mechanism," which he has wholly become.

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[11] Quoted from the *Udana*, VIII, 3, by Nyanatiloka, *op. cit.*, p. 19. A similar passage from the *Iti-vuttaka* is quoted by Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism, op. cit.*, pp. 88–89, in his chapter on "Man and His Destiny."

As time passed after the advent of Buddhism, various things crept into the Buddhism of the masses that are as foreign to the spirit and teachings of the founder as, today, much that goes by the name of Christianity is foreign to the spirit and teachings of Jesus. Innumerable Bodhisattvas were invented, and some of them came to be regarded virtually as beneficent deities. Before images of the Buddha and of the Bodhisattvas, acts of worship are performed. Flowers, incense, and candles are offered, and prayers are uttered, much as is done by devotees of theistic religions to their God. But, as Pratt points out, for even moderately enlightened Buddhists "worshiping" means essentially "paying reverence to"; so that they "worship" the Buddha in the same sense as that in which Americans "worship" the flag when, watching a Fourth-of-July parade, they uncover their heads as the flag passes; or "worship" the national anthem when they rise while it is played. And prayer, for such Buddhists, is not petition for favors, but a giving of the mind intently for the time being to the virtues inculcated by the Buddha. Such acts are meritorious: the person who performs them is improved by them. On the other hand, worship of the "nats" or the "devatas"—these are spirits taken over from the native animism and gods taken over from Hinduism—is an altogether different thing which, as a Ceylonese monk told Pratt, "has nothing to do with religion. It is a matter of business—one contracts with the devata for his assistance, agreeing that when the requested aid is actually given, one will make an offering to the Buddha and transfer the merit thus acquired to the devata. It is . . . no more religion than is dealing with the government. Religion has to do with the Teacher." [12]

No more than these few words will here be said concerning the changes that came into Buddhism in the course of time as it was carried to distant lands by its missionaries, for it seems to the present writer, who regards the Buddha, Jesus, Zoroaster, and other such religious geniuses as spiritual benefactors of mankind, that what those great teachers themselves taught—as nearly as it can be ascertained—is vastly more illuminating and inspiring than what their all-too-human little followers have since done to, made of, added to, or omitted from, the original teachings.

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[12] Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

## Chapter 4

# SOME FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

There are a number of concepts which writers on the history or the philosophy of religion find themselves in need of using frequently—certain ones as bases in distinguishing various classes of religion, others in distinguishing religion from certain other things, others to describe some things connected with religion. These concepts belong to ordinary language and are serviceable on occasions similar to those on which they acquired meaning for us. But when one attempts to use them in other than such more or less stereotyped contexts, one soon becomes aware that, however firm a center those concepts have, they, like other unanalyzed terms, are too fuzzy at the edges to be very useful as instruments of thought.

In the theory of religion, however, as in that of other types of human experience and indeed also in theoretical issues of the natural sciences, questions of fact are inseparably bound up with questions of terminology; so that as soon as inquiry attempts to penetrate below the surface of a topic and to establish anything not already familiar, the need becomes imperative to be clear as to which things exactly one means to indicate by the names one employs, and what characters exactly one means to predicate by one's key adjectives. Without this, neither the reader nor one's self really knows what one is speaking about, or what one is asserting about it. The inquiries necessary to avoid this predicament may at times be somewhat tedious, and persons impatient to speak—even if at the cost of saying little or nothing—sometimes slightingly refer to such inquiries as mere "semantical exercises." Yet, without benefit of their fruits, disquisitions on technical problems are at best but polite literary essays, and establish nothing.

We shall therefore now examine critically a number of the concepts alluded to, discard such of them as we may find unserviceable, and define or otherwise attempt to clarify certain others. In the definitions we offer, we shall throughout endeavor to respect the ordinary usage of the terms concerned so far as a firm and consistent one exists. But we shall have to stipulate instead of only analyzing meaning, at points where ordinary usage is vacillating, vague, or inconsistent.

## Religions—Lower and Higher, Natural and Ethical

Religions are often referred to as lower or higher, primitive or advanced. These terms, however, are open to the objection that they are essentially evaluative, whereas descriptive terms are what we need as basis for an objective classification of religions.

Another unsatisfactory division is into religions that are "natural" in the sense that the values sought in them are "concrete, tangible, practical wants"—food and water, protection against disease, storms, earthquakes, or defeat in war, and so on; and religions, on the other hand, that are "ethical" in the sense that the values sought are "not so much material goods as a pure heart and a noble life."[1] The trouble with this division is that so many religions fit under both headings at once. Although the intention evidently is to class Christianity, for example, as an "ethical" religion—which no doubt it is in part—the fact is that Christians, like the adherents of the "natural" religions, offer prayers for rain in times of drought, for protection from floods and plagues, for victory in war, and so on; so that Christianity is for its adherents a "natural" religion in the sense stated, as well as an "ethical" religion.

[1] W. K. Wright, *A Student's Philosophy of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), pp. 5, 6.

On the other hand, there is hardly a religion, even among those of primitive peoples, that does not comprise and attempt to enforce some code of ethics; so that these religions could be denied the name of "ethical" only by persons who, being unacquainted with the facts recorded in such works as Westermarck's *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, naïvely take as absolute and universally valid the particular code of ethics under which they have themselves been brought up. They fail to realize that the modes of behavior that are right and wrong—ethical and unethical—in a given society, and are commanded or forbidden by its religion, are relative in part to the nature of that specific society's major problems, material and social, and to the knowledge and other resources at its command, as well as to the abstract nature of moral rightness and wrongness—which itself may well be absolute. For example, moral rightness of behavior, in the abstract and absolutely, might be held by someone to consist in conduciveness of the behavior to more happiness or less unhappiness for all persons affected than would any alternative feasible behavior; and yet a particular practice, which in a given society would be morally right on this principle, could well, on that very same principle, be morally wrong in a society of a different type, or one faced by different problems, or one possessed of different resources.

### Theistic and Nontheistic

Again, to divide religions into those which are theistic in any one of the more specific senses of this generic term, and those which are nontheistic, has the defect of putting together under the latter heading such radically different religions as that of the Melanesians, which appeals to a supernatural but not theistic agency—*mana*—and contemporary Humanism, which abjures supernaturalism in any form. Moreover, the use of such terms as God or gods, divinity, deity, divine, theism, brings with it the necessity—too seldom explicitly satisfied—of specifying what marks off spiritual beings or agencies that are "gods," or if impersonal nevertheless "divine," from spirits that are not gods and yet are not the ghosts of the dead. The Melanesians, for example, recognize not only *tindalos*—ghosts of men who have died—but also *vui*, i.e., spirits who never were men, but who nevertheless seem not to fit under the same headings as those which elsewhere are thought of as gods. As regards prayers and offerings, Rivers states that, at least so far as the natives of the Banks Islands are concerned, "it is clear that prayer is definitely associated with ghosts and not with spirits"; that offerings are made to ghosts; and that in the case of spirits the offering seems to be made not to the spirit, but to a man that is known to possess a stone or other object which is the abiding place of a *vui*, so that he may perform the rite by which the *vui* is moved to confer the benefit sought.[2] The man who receives the offering is thus a paid intermediary, somewhat as the priests in some other religions.

Farther on in this chapter, an analysis will be offered of what differentiates agencies termed divine from those which would not be so classed. Here however, two things must be made clear. One is that, although the word "theism" is often used in the sense of monotheism, and indeed of personalistic monotheism, we shall on the contrary employ it throughout in its primary, generic sense, according to which not only monotheism, but also pantheism, polytheism, henotheism, deism, etc., are species of theism. The other thing to be said is that, notwithstanding the heterogeneity pointed out above of what the term "nontheistic religions" covers, no term that would be better for our purposes seems available. We shall therefore use it in preference to, for example, "atheistic"; for "atheism" has come not only to be commonly taken in the sense of disbelief in, specifically, the God of personalistic monotheism, but also to be employed as a term of opprobrium without regard to such merits as the positive affirmations of one or another doctrine termed atheistic may possess.

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[2] W. H. R. Rivers, *The History of Melanesian Society* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1914), Vol. II, pp. 415–16.

### Naturalistic and Supernaturalistic

Another proposal whose meaning needs clarification is that which divides religions into naturalistic and supernaturalistic; for these terms too are ambiguous. Buddhism, for instance, is not "naturalistic" in the special, metaphysically materialistic sense which a number of the contemporary philosophers who call their views naturalistic give to this word. Nature, for Buddhism, as for these philosophers, is indeed the realm of all things and events which come into existence and pass out of it according to fixed laws linking effects to causes. But Buddhism holds that Nature as so conceived comprises far more than contemporary natural science has yet discovered—far more than is perceptible directly by man's so-called five senses, or is discoverable from this by inductive inferences even as recondite as those of modern theoretical physics.

It is essential in this connection to keep in mind that Natural Science, in the current sense of the term, is nothing more and nothing less than the game—or, if you will, the enterprise—of discovering all that can be discovered in, precisely, *those two ways*, viz., perceptual observation, and inductive inference from the facts observed; and therefore that it tacitly limits what it means by "Nature" to such portions of the realm of laws as are accessible to man *in those two ways.* That is, Natural Science ignores altogether the possibility, which Buddhism maintains is real, that additional "senses" can be developed by man, through which are disclosed beings, things, and events that have place in other dimensions of Nature and are governed by laws of their own quite as rigorous as those studied by the physical or the biological sciences.

Because of this ambiguity of the words "Nature" and "naturalistic," confusion would inevitably result if Buddhism and the other religions we classed with it were referred to as naturalistic. A corresponding objection would arise if we were to call supernaturalistic the religions that believe in the existence of gods, demons, and spirits; for Buddhism is such a religion, and yet it neither consists in worship of these beings nor regards them as any more "supernatural" than are men, insects, or fishes. It holds that, as genuinely as these, they are a part of Nature, but a part of it not observable by sight or touch, nor by the other ordinary human senses.

### The Meaning of "Supernatural," "Natural," and "Miraculous"

In discussions of religion, both those persons who believe and those who disbelieve that anything describable as "supernatural" exists seem to have in most cases but a vague idea of what they mean by the term. Yet, without a fairly definite and shared meaning for it, believers and disbelievers do not even understand one another, to say nothing of disagreeing really not merely verbally. Examination of the variety of contexts in which the word "supernatural" is actually employed suggests that its meaning is most adequately analyzable in terms of three characteristics, which together entail a fourth.

The first is that what is regarded as supernatural is always, at the time, thought of as *essentially mysterious*; that is, as beyond possibility of being fully understood. Secondly, the supernatural is conceived as of a *psychical* nature; that is, as capable of perception, of feeling, of purposive action, of understanding speech, of being influenced in ways more or less similar to those which influence men; or, at least, as capable of some, though not in every case of all, of these psychical functions. But, thirdly, the supernatural's ways of doing and knowing are imagined as transcending those of men, so that it is imagined not simply as psychical but as *superhumanly* so in one respect or another, if not always in all. Sometimes, or in some of its forms, it is thought of nevertheless as non-personal, although it is a question, of course, to what extent something can be psychical without being personal. But no answer to it is possible without a conception of the meaning of these two terms much more definite than is the ingenuous common one.

The fourth characteristic derives from the conjunction of the first three. It is that the supernatural is *awesome*—awe-inspiring. The mysterious has connection with religion only in so far as also awe-inspiring; for the mysterious sometimes is only intriguing, or in some cases inspires simply fear or terror, as did *aqua tofana* in the seventeenth century, or as might mysterious rays today. But awe is inspired only by an object which, in addition to being mysterious, is imagined more or less vaguely as psychical—usually, in particular, as aware and purposive—and as more or less potent over man and therefore fearful. These characteristics of the object, taken together, are what generates the *respectful fear* which *Ehrfurcht*, the German word for Awe, literally describes. French and Spanish have no single word for it and therefore say "respectful fear" or "reverential fear"—*crainte respectueuse, temor reverencial.*

By "supernatural" then, we shall mean anything which is thought of as *essentially mysterious;* is conceived more or less specifically as *psychical;* is assumed to have *power over man* at least in certain respects or on certain occasions; and which therefore is *awe-inspiring.*

This definition seems to fit pretty well the great majority of instances of the actual use of the adjective "supernatural" in discussions of religion. It should be noticed, however, that a being or event that is thought of as supernatural in the four-fold sense analyzed above might yet in fact be just as "natural" —just as much a part of Nature—as men themselves are. That is, its behavior well might, like theirs, conform to psychological or other laws of its own, and therefore be theoretically capable of being eventually investigated and understood. Our understanding of it could then be applied; just as now is applied, in our dealings with other men, such understanding as we have gained of the laws of human behavior. Indeed, prayer, sacrifices, humility, obedience, and certain other practices and attitudes enjoined by theistic religions, are tacitly based on the supposition that something *is* known as to the psychology of the gods—as to the factors which influence the behavior of the supernatural beings or forces addressed in those practices and attitudes.

It is therefore appropriate that we should now state more explicitly the meaning we shall adopt for the adjective "natural" as opposite of "supernatural." We shall call agencies "natural" when they satisfy the following conditions:

*a*) They may be not yet known or understood, but they are not assumed to be beyond possibility of understanding. That is, they are agencies, the laws of whose operation are either already known, or are supposed capable of being eventually discovered through methodical observation, experiment, and induction.

*b*) They are agencies in part psychical when they are men, animals, or other possible conscious beings operating either as individuals or as societies; but they include also nonpsychical, i.e., purely physical, chemical, or biological agencies.

*c*) They are therefore agencies that are at the command of man in so far as he both has come to understand the conditions subject to which they operate, and happens to be able to institute those conditions.

*d*) These agencies may inspire fear, or on the contrary confidence, according to their known relations to man's purposes and to man's inability, or ability, to control their operations; but they do not inspire awe.

Because of the ambiguity of the terms "natural" and "supernatural" as ordinarily used, the distinction between the two is hard to draw as sharply as would be desirable, but the most radical difference seems to be that being *essentially* mysterious, i.e., not simply mysterious for the time being, but *incapable* of being understood, is a part of what is commonly intended by "supernatural"; whereas "natural" implies capability of being understood, so that when the natural is mysterious or the mysterious natural, it is mysterious only accidentally and at the time.

A "miracle," we may now say, is an event supposedly due to the operation of a supernatural agency. In connection with reports of miracles, however, it is important to remember on the one hand that it is psychologically easy for the humble, conscious of their ignorance, to conclude from *ignoramus* to *ignorabimus*, i.e., from not understood to essentially mysterious and hence to supernatural and miraculous; and equally easy, on the other hand, for the learned, confident as they are in the solid knowledge and vast powers science has won, to conclude that nothing that would be inexplicable in terms of what science now knows can really have occurred, and hence that even well-attested reports of such occurrences, which some call miracles, cannot really be correct. An example would be reports of the levitation of material bodies.[3]

## Magic

The relation between magic and religion has been much discussed by anthropologists and students of the history of religions. It cannot be decided without a definite conception of what each of them is. We shall eventually offer an account of the essential nature of religion, but what magic is seems a much easier question to answer. Magic, like engineering, is application of theory to practice for the production of desired results. The difference, if, as ordinarily assumed, magic is nothing but delusion, is that its theoretical premises are false, whereas those of engineering, i.e., of applied science, are true. In both cases, the premises are fruits of the theory-constructive imagination, but, in the case of engineering, they are fruits of the imagination controlled by experiment, induction, and empirical verification; whereas, in the case of magic, the premises come out of the uncontrolled imagination.

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[3] Reports of this phenomenon in the lives of various saints abound, but are open to suspicion as often uncritical or not disinterested. But for circumstantial reports of it under controlled conditions by eminent scientific observers, see, for examples, an article entitled "Notes of an Enquiry into the Phenomena Called Spiritual During the Years 1870–73," by Sir William Crookes, *Quarterly Journal of Science* (January, 1874); or the book *Les Forces Naturelles Inconnues*, by Camille Flammarion (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, Editeur, 1907), pp. 114, 216, and *passim*.

At least, the above is what magic is if, as postulated there, it really does not work. But a stronger case than is commonly suspected can be made out for the contention that magic—whether so called, or termed, perhaps, psychokinesis, paranormal action, or extrasensory perception—really and not just seemingly works in some instances, and in some of these somehow otherwise than through suggestion. If this should indeed be so, we should then have to define magic, or rather such magic as really works, otherwise than as above. We should have to say that it too is application of natural laws, but ones not yet well or widely understood, according to which such mental states as belief and volition can, under special and rare circumstances, cause material effects of which normally they are quite incapable; and such effects not only in the body of the person believing or willing, but in other things too. The ideas the magician may have as to why or how his magic works may well be quite fantastic, but one should remember that there is, within limits, such a thing as doing something in the right way, though out of a mistaken theory.

Magic therefore should not, as almost universally is done in this purportedly scientific age, be tossed out of court *a priori*. As we have already pointed out, the truly scientific spirit is neither the will to believe nor the will to disbelieve, but the will to investigate; and the relevant question about magic is not whether its assumptions clash with some of those—possibly too sweeping—of current natural science, but only whether any of the practices of magic can be shown ever really to work. If it should turn out that they sometimes do work, then scientific theory doubtless would somehow eventually make room for the fact, just as, in the present writer's lifetime, it made room for the transmutation of elements once this was proved to occur, notwithstanding that transmutation clashed with the conception of the atom until then accepted by physics, and hence was commonly dismissed as but a superstition of medieval alchemists.

Rivers, in the work already cited, writes: "It is customary to define religious and magical rites on the basis of the mental attitude of the agent who is performing them. Actions are ascribed to magic if they are in themselves sufficient to produce the desired effect . . ."[4] He notes that this way of differentiating magic has the defect of doing so in subjective terms rather than in terms which would permit an external observer of the rites to identify them as magical not religious; but he nevertheless adopts it. No mention need be made here of what, in contrast, he conceives religion to be, for his idea of it fits only the theistic religions. But his statement that in magic the actions performed are regarded as "in themselves sufficient to produce the desired effect" supports our contention that magic, like engineering, is application of theory to practice, even if in magic the theory happens to be false. The attitude of the magician, as of the engineer, is one of command—of assertion and of exercise of powers to deal with practical problems, which his knowledge, if it is really knowledge, confers on him.

But practical problems spring from disparity between existing states of affairs and desiderated ones. Hence there are two typical ways in which such problems may be solved. One of them—which is that attempted by applied science and by magic alike—consists in exertion of such powers as one has, to alter the existing outer situation so as to make it conform to what one desires. The other—which we shall eventually contend is characteristic of the religious attitude—consists in willingly altering or surrendering one's desires when he finds his powers, which always have limits, insufficient to make over the external state of affairs to suit his desires. In a theistic religion, for example, the devotee who, in the face of situations that clash with his will but which he cannot alter, is genuinely able to say: "Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done" genuinely solves his problem; for he does terminate—even if in a manner different from exertion of his outer powers—the disparity between what he faces and what he wants, which is the root of the problem. Such willing surrender is very different from the inwardly rebellious enduring of what one cannot change, which does not do away with the disparity and therefore brings no peace.

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[4] Rivers, *op. cit.*, pp. 404–5.

## Divinity

As pointed out earlier, to employ in discussions of religion such terms as "divine," "divinity," "deity," "god," "theistic," makes it necessary to specify how the agencies so described differ from any to which one would hold those terms inapplicable. If "goodness" were proposed as what differentiates spiritual beings that are "gods" from those that are "devils" or "demons," the objection would arise that not only the gods of the polytheisms, but also the Jehovah of the Old Testament, are depicted as possessing some traits—such as vindictiveness, jealousy, cruelty, proneness to anger, vanity, etc.—which are not consonant with perfect or even very good moral character. The most that could consistently be held would then be that divinity is an attribute which admits of degrees, so that, the greater the goodness of an agency that qualifies in other respects, the more divine it is.

The other requirements which a being must satisfy in order to rank as a god would seem to be substantially those in terms of which the "supernatural" was defined earlier, so that what is supernatural is held to be in addition "divine," rather than "devilish" or neutral, in proportion to the goodness or moral worth it is believed to have. This conception of deities leaves room for spirits neither gods nor devils such as the *vui* of the Melanesians, which apparently are thought of neither as good nor as bad, but whose *mana* can be turned either to good or evil purposes by the spell of the possessor of the stone or other object in which the *vui* supposedly resides. Such *vui* would then be spiritual robots. Like the material, man-made machines, they would have some powers transcending those of man, and yet, like those machines, would be virtually slaves of the man who knows the levers or switches—here, the incantations—which control them. Codrington quotes the following account, given "after considerable reflection" by a Banks Islands native, of what a *vui* is: "It lives, thinks, has more intelligence than a man; knows things which are secret without seeing; is supernaturally powerful with *mana;* has no form to be seen; has no soul, because itself is like a soul." [5]

But how then about the spirits of men that have died; would they qualify as gods if "deity" means what we have said? This would depend partly on how mysterious or on the contrary familiar they were held to be, partly on how "good" or at least friendly; and partly on how powerful over men or over events affecting men. Actually, the ghosts of men that have died are sometimes regarded as gods, especially if, while living, they did heroic deeds. However, as Codrington remarks, much caution is called for as to reports of the gods of primitive peoples, for "gods" is a translation—often representing little but the guess or preconceived notion of a foreign and superficial observer—of some native word which, to the native, means something very different from what the word "god" means to the translator. Codrington mentions the instance of a Fijian chief reported to have said to a missionary, "If you die first, I shall make you my god," and to have sometimes said of himself, "I am a god." But Codrington then points out that the word used by the chief was not the English "god" but the Fijian *kalou*, which means simply that on his decease his departed spirit would be invoked and worshiped.[6]

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[5] R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1891), p. 123.

## Sin, Sacredness, Saintliness, Worship

The term "sin" offers no particular difficulty. It seems to be used in all cases to mean any act, thought, or feeling that is a violation of the injunctions of the religion of the person who happens to be applying the word. Hence something which would be regarded as a sin by a Hindu might not be so regarded by a Christian or by a Mohammedan; or something regarded as a sin by a Catholic might not be so regarded by a Protestant; and so on. What are and are not sins is thus a matter not of objective characteristics, whose presence or absence in given acts would be observable by everyone alike; but, just as what are and are not "crimes," a matter of whether the act does or does not violate a certain code. In the instance of crimes, however, the code is known to be a man-made one, intended to influence behavior in directions held desirable by the lawmakers; whereas in the instance of sins the code derives from some set of religious beliefs.

The duties enjoined by a religion, and therefore the sins which violations of such injunctions constitute, may be of three kinds:

*a*) *Social.* Social sins would be violations of religious commands relating to conduct toward other animate beings; for example, in the case of Old Testament religion, violations of the commands not to bear false witness, not to steal, not to make one's servants or one's cattle work on the seventh day, etc.

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

*b*) *Private.* Private sins would be violations of religious injunctions as to conduct toward one's self. Examples in certain religions would be gluttony, sloth, drunkenness, suicide, and so on.

*c*) *Theological,* or more broadly, *hierological.* Under this third heading would come the sins that are violations of the commands of a religion as to conduct toward its God or gods, or toward its sacred objects or places. Examples might be blasphemy, neglect of worship, irreverence, sacrilege, desecration, or profanation of sacred objects or places. Since there are such objects and places in nontheistic religions as well as in theistic ones, theological sin constitutes only a special instance of hierological sin, i.e., of sin against the sacred.

The notion of the *sacred* or *holy* thus has a certain connection with that of sin. To regard something as "sacred" seems to mean that, for some reason which the person who so regards it does not clearly understand but which he nonetheless believes to exist, the object concerned is entitled to respect and to reverence. Respect is primarily a matter of behavior: that something is to be respected means that to deride it, interfere with it, criticize it, or treat it lightly is categorically *forbidden.* Reverence, on the other hand, is primarily a matter of inner attitude and feeling. It springs from belief that its object is *inherently worthy of respect,* no matter whether treating it disrespectfully is or is not forbidden by external authority. That is termed "sacred," then, which is believed inherently worthy of respect, i.e., is revered, but the nature of whose title to reverence remains in some degree mysterious, not analyzed.

The idea of *saintliness,* in turn, is connected with that of sacredness or holiness. When the object that is held sacred is specifically a human being, then he is termed "saintly"—

the word "saint," indeed, deriving from the Latin *sanctus*, which means "made sacred."

Another notion, closely related to those just analyzed, is that of *worship, adoration*. As pointed out in passing in the preceding chapter, to worship is essentially to treat with reverence, and more particularly to do so on some ritual occasion. Worthiness of the object of such treatment is, as we have just seen, a part of the meaning of reverence; and, linguistically, worthiness is virtually the same word as the noun Worship, since the latter analyzes into "worth" plus the suffix "-ship," which, like "-ness," denotes state, quality, or condition. In theistic religions, however, the object of worship is conceived to derive its title to reverence from its divine status, so that, in these religions, to worship means to pay ritual reverence to a divine being. This is also substantially the sense of "to adore," which, etymologically, means to speak to, or pray to (a divine being).

## Soul, Spirit, Spiritual

In discussions of religious matters, these terms are commonly used both vaguely, i.e., with a meaning not precisely conceived; and ambiguously, i.e., in several senses, more or less vague. In such a statement as that God is a spirit (or a spiritual being), and in reference to spirits of the dead and to other spirits, the word "spirit" seems intended to mean a being whose essence is mental or psychical, as distinguished from physical; and which either never had a material body, or, if it had or has one, is anyway capable of existing without it. A spirit, however, is sometimes conceived as having, or as capable of having, a "spiritual body." What such a body might consist in is hardly clear; but it seems to be thought of as, like a person's shadow, visible under some circumstances, but not tangible. Something like this appears to be meant when reference is made to the shades of the dead, and to phantoms.

The spirit, when embodied, is conceived in addition to be what "animates" the body; i.e., to be that, presence of which in that body makes it living instead of dead, as the body becomes when the spirit leaves it. Since the most immediately noticeable evidence of death is cessation of breathing, it is natural that the word "spirit," which derives from the Latin *spirare*, to breathe, should have come to denote something conceived to leave the body at death.

The distinction between soul and spirit is very vague and shifting. In many instances of the use of the word "soul," it seems to mean much the same thing as "spirit." In current eschatological usage, however, it is man's soul, rather than man's spirit, that is said to be saved or damned. Not only in Christian, but in Greek, Egyptian, and some other religions, two elements in man besides his material body are believed to exist—soul and spirit, *psyche* and *pneuma*, *ba* and *khu*, etc.—but a clear account of the difference between the two is seldom given, and none can be said to be commonly well-recognized. In French, *esprit*, however, or in German, *Geist*, usually denotes primarily the intellectual part of the mind; and *âme*, or *Seele*, the mind as a whole, or sometimes primarily the aspect of it consisting of the sentiments and moral dispositions, whether good or bad. In English, a similar distinction between spirit and soul seems intended on certain occasions.

In the expression "spiritual values," used in a broad sense, what appears to be meant is the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and religious values; as contrasted with "carnal" or "material" values, which would include the pleasures of the senses, wealth, power, rank, position, bodily strength or beauty, and the like.

"Spirituality," on the other hand, has a narrower sense. It seems to denote that which a person has in so far as, by temperament or by choice, he aspires after purity, holiness, moral perfection; is religious and reverent; is more concerned with "souls" than with bodies; and has other like characteristics.

### Superstition

The two terms, superstition and faith, are commonly used rather loosely and variously. Hence no definition of them that is precise is likely to fit all current instances of their application. The definitions offered here, however, which specify with some exactness the sense in which they are intended to be used in these pages, also attempt to respect the ordinary usage of the terms so far as it is firm.

It is sometimes said that superstitions are things some other person believes, but which one's self disbelieves. Evidently, however, this is not what anyone means to assert about a given belief when he declares it to be a superstition. He means not only that he disbelieves the proposition which the other person believes, but also that that proposition is false. Indeed, even this is not enough to define superstition, since belief of something false is also what we have in instances of simple error—i.e., of error not superstitious. The additional characteristics which differentiate superstition from mere error seem to be (*a*) that in superstition the false proposition concerned is believed *gratuitously*, that is, without any evidence which would prove, or, so far as it happened to go, would make probable, that the proposition is true; and (*b*) that in superstition the existence and operation of some supernatural agency is assumed. That superstition is also something more or less pernicious follows, of course, from its character as error, since an erroneous belief tends to cause behavior of kinds inappropriate to the true facts.

Error not superstitious, on the other hand, is belief based on evidence, but on items of evidence which happen to be misleading because, although by themselves they make probable that the proposition concerned is true, nevertheless additional evidence exists which is not considered, but which is sufficient to prove the proposition false.

By superstition, then, we shall mean gratuitous belief of a false or probably false proposition that presupposes the existence and operation of some supernatural agency. This seems to be what we mean if we call superstitious, for example, the belief held by some at one time that the world would end in the year A.D. 1000. As the centuries elapsed since that date have proved, it was false that the world would end at that time, and belief that it would do so was superstitious because held despite the lack of any evidence to support it, and because God's supernatural agency was supposed involved.

Of course, that "superstition" means gratuitous belief of a false or probably false proposition presupposing something supernatural does not entail that anything a given person declares to be a superstition really is one, for those who hold the belief which he declares superstitious may hold it because of some item of evidence they have that points to its being true; and the person in view may not know that this evidence exists and is what determines their belief. Or he may be mistaken in thinking that the proposition they believe is false; or in thinking that the agency they assume is a supernatural one. Yet, as the example given above shows, some beliefs really are superstitions and really are known to be so; for there are propositions which imply supernatural agency and which some persons believe without evidence, and which can definitely be proved to be false.

## Faith

With regard to faith, there appear to be one general and one more specific sense in which the term is used in discussions of religion. The general sense is belief, perhaps based on some evidence, but very firm, or at least more firm, or/and of more extensive content, than the evidence possessed by the believer rationally warrants. It is difficult to see why faith, as consisting simply in this, should be regarded as a virtue. Examples of belief which, in most or perhaps in all persons having it, would be faith in the sense just described would be conviction that there is for human beings a life after death; or conviction that each man has lived on earth one or more times before his present life; or conviction that the Bible is the word of a divine being, or more specifically of a divine being such as monotheism describes; or conviction that such a being exists; etc.

The more specific sense, which "faith" seems to have in cases where it would be a virtue, would be illustrated by the statement, for example, that faith can "move mountains"; or when one speaks of "faith" healings; or of the value of faith in God. "Faith" then apparently means not only (*a*) very firm belief, either unsupported or insufficiently supported by evidence; but in addition either (*b*) that the content of the belief tends to be made true by the very act of believing it firmly; or (*c*) that the content of the belief is of such a nature that firm belief of it tends to have certain valuable results. An example illustrating this second case would be provided by belief that a powerful and loving God exists, who has us in his keeping. There is no doubt that, irrespective of whether it is true or false that such a God exists, firm belief that he does exist is capable of generating in the believer a precious feeling of security.

On the other hand, an example illustrating the case (*b*) would be that if a person is faced with a task he has never before attempted and which he has no evidence he can perform, and yet he firmly believes that he can do it, this very belief is a factor which makes success more likely than doubt of his ability would have done; i.e., that belief tends to make it true that he can do the task. Again, in the instance of faith healings, what is today known of the somatic effects of various mental states shows that firm faith that a certain bodily change will occur can sometimes contribute to bring it about. And of course it is not positively known that the effects of such faith can be only on the body of the person who has the faith. Instances are from time to time alleged to have occurred and to have been carefully verified, where the faith of a parent resulted in the healing of an infant too young to have any faith or to understand what was being attempted. In such instances, the healing is usually ascribed to divine intervention; but if the healing really occurred and really was not due to ordinary physiological processes, it would be simpler to suppose that the parent's faith operated somehow directly on the infant's body, than to suppose that it operated first on a divine being, who was thereby moved then to heal the infant. We do not understand any better what the specific *modus operandi* of the healing is if we ascribe it to a divine being, than we do if we ascribe it directly to the faith of the parents; and *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem.*

## Chapter 5

# BELIEF, KNOWLEDGE, AND HOW EACH IS ACQUIRED

We need now to supplement what was said about belief and evidence in the last chapter by an exposition of the relation between belief and knowledge, and by an account of the various grounds of knowledge and causes of belief; for the matter is of truly fundamental importance in connection with religion.

### Believing and Beliefs

Introspectively considered, belief is an unanalyzable kind of feeling or psychological attitude. The terms "belief," "acceptance," and "conviction," are approximate synonyms. As pointed out in our discussion of the nature of faith, belief is capable of being more or less firm; that is, more or less tenacious or stubborn, more or less resistant to alteration by argument or by adduction of evidence. Firmness in this sense can attach to disbelief, to doubt, or to any given degree of inclination to believe, quite as easily as it can attach to complete belief. Apparently, then, such firmness springs either from a certain kind of temperament or, more frequently, from the fact that exceptionally strong wishes, fears, or other emotions happen in a given person to be connected with the content of a particular belief. Firmness, i.e., tenacity, rigidity, in belief or doubt is thus a characteristic which has no logical significance—no connection with the degree of probability that the belief is true, which the evidence possessed logically determines. When a person is said to have a "closed mind"—either in general or on some particular subject—what is meant is that his beliefs, or as the case may be, his doubts or disbeliefs, are firm in the sense just described. "Open-mindedness" is the opposite characteristic; it is willingness to consider new evidence and readiness to let one's belief or disbelief be determined by it. This disposition we may term plasticity of belief, as contrasted with rigidity, tenacity, or firmness.

The *degree of plasticity or of rigidity* of a person's inclination to believe or disbelieve a given thing is thus, as pointed out above, quite a different matter from the *degree of his inclination to believe or disbelieve* that thing; his inclinations to believe it may be great, or complete, or small, etc., but anyway rigid; or it may be of any one of these same degrees, but on the contrary plastic.

Because firmness of belief, although sometimes psychologically very important, has nothing to do with the truth or falsity of what is believed (except in the special kind of cases illustrated in the last paragraph of our discussion of faith), nor therefore with the question as to when belief is mere belief and when on the contrary it is well-grounded belief, i.e., is knowledge, we shall here not concern ourselves further with the matter of rigidity or plasticity, but only with what we shall call degree of *inclination to believe.*

In terms now of the quantitatively variable psychological attitude which the expression "inclination to believe" designates, we may define "belief," taken in a strict sense, as the maximum possible degree—the 100 per cent degree—of inclination to believe; and "disbelief," taken likewise strictly, as the minimum possible degree—the zero degree—of such inclination; the intermediate degrees being positive or negative according as they are nearer to complete belief or to complete disbelief. Ordinarily, however, the things we say we believe are ones toward which we have a high degree of inclination to believe, as well as those toward which the inclination is really maximal; and, similarly, the things we say we disbelieve.

Objectively considered, belief or positive inclination to believe is *readiness to act*—readiness to act as, for our purposes and in given circumstances, it would be reasonable for us to act if that which we say we believe should happen to be true.

In what is commonly called "*a* belief" or "*an* opinion" there is always to be discerned on the one hand the attitude called "inclination to believe" (whether maximal or not), and on the other, that to which it attaches, i.e., that which is believed. The latter we shall speak of as *content* of the belief, or as the *proposition* believed. It may or may not be formulated in words, whether overtly or to one's self. When a clerk unrolls paper to wrap a parcel, there comes a moment when he believes the length unrolled to be enough for the purpose; but ordinarily he would act on this belief, without putting it into words even to himself, by tearing off the paper. Similarly, the great majority of the beliefs we gain by perception remain unformulated—belief, for example, that there is a puddle in our way, or that a given chair is occupied by the cat, etc. In such cases the belief is tacit, unformulated; yet active, i.e., acted upon.

Again, a belief may at a given time be either awake or dormant—conscious or subconscious. At any moment, the immense majority of one's beliefs are dormant because the purposes and circumstances to which they have relevance are not present. That sugar is soluble in water is doubtless one of the many things the reader believes—indeed not only believes but knows; yet it is highly probable that, at the time he was reading the earlier paragraphs of this chapter, that belief of his was completely dormant. But had his sleeve then happened to be smeared by a child with a candy bar, that belief would probably have been awakened by the relevance of it to that accident.

## Two Senses of "to Know"

Especially in connection with certain religious experiences, it is essential to remember that "to know" has a variety of senses, and to distinguish between two of them in particular.

In one of them, that which is said to be known is some feeling, emotion, mood, sensation, or attitude, as directly experienced. It is in this sense that we say of a person that he knows or has known sorrow, or love, or sadness, or joy, or ecstasy, or hunger, or salty taste, or nausea, etc. That is, he has experienced these states of consciousness.

When we say that a man "has known poverty," what we usually mean is that he has experienced certain feelings—those, namely, which ordinarily are caused in a person by awareness of the fact that he is poor. Thus, a man might *be* poor, and yet if he did not know it, he would not "know poverty" in the sense of experiencing those feelings. On the other hand, a man might believe that he is poor and because of this "know poverty," i.e., experience those feelings, although he might be mistaken in thinking that he is poor. This example brings out sharply the difference between the two senses of "to know" in view here.

"Knowing," in the sense of experiencing sensations, feelings, attitudes, etc., we shall call *experient knowing*, and speak correspondingly of *experient knowledge*. On the other hand, for knowing in the sense of *knowing that* . . . —for example, knowing that 2+2=4, knowing that this is paper, etc.—we shall use the term *scient knowing*, and speak of the knowledge so obtained as *scient knowledge*. For these two senses of "to know," French has the two different verbs, *connaître* and *savoir*; and German, *kennen* and *wissen*. But in English some two such descriptive expressions as proposed above have to be used as labels for the two senses.

## The Known

It is important to be clear that "experient knowing" and "scient knowing" are not names for two different *ways* of knowing one thing, but names for two different *senses* of "knowing"; and that what is "known" is something of an altogether different sort in the two cases. Note in particular that the content of experient knowing—salty taste, or joy, or hunger, etc.—is never capable of being true or false. What is true or false in instances of such knowing is only *that* a given person, whether one's self or another, experiences saltiness, or joy, or hunger, etc., at a given time; and knowledge *that he does*, or does not, is an instance of scient knowledge. The content of scient knowledge is always, as in this instance, of the kind about which the question of truth or falsity is congruous; whereas that question is never congruous about the content of experient knowledge.

It may be well to call attention to the fact that in the great majority of cases the content of experient knowing has little intrinsic interest and is therefore immediately *used* rather than attended to. That is, it is at once automatically *interpreted* in some way; for instance, as due to such and such a cause, or as sign of this or that, or as calling for some particular kind of action, or as meaning one thing or another, etc. The feeling called "hunger," for instance, is ordinarily interpreted as meaning that the body needs food, though this might actually be false; a certain auditory sensation may be interpreted as caused by the blowing of some whistle, though it might be only what is called "whistling in the ears"; and so on. It is vital not to confuse the experience itself with what, rightly or wrongly, one takes it to be an experience *of*, i.e., with what one takes its *import* to be. The difference is one we shall need to keep clearly in mind when we come to discuss certain forms of what is ambiguously called "religious experience," or "religious knowledge."

## Knowledge, Belief, and Evidence

When it is said that there is much that we believe but do not know, the knowing referred to is necessarily scient knowing; for the content of experient knowing is never something capable of being believed, disbelieved, or doubted any more than of being true or false. Confining then our attention at this time to scient knowledge, what we must ask is what exactly it consists in and how it is related to belief.

The first thing to notice is that although we can believe without knowing, we cannot know without believing. If we know something, we also believe it: I know that I have five fingers on each hand, and I also believe it, though my belief is not then *mere* belief but is *grounded* belief; that is, belief based on evidence adequate to justify it—the evidence being in this case perceptual.

Knowledge of facts, then—or, as we may also put it, knowledge of certainties—is *belief based on evidence sufficient to prove that what is believed is true.* It must be stressed that believing something that happens to be true does not of itself constitute knowing that it is true, since, for the latter, it is essential that the believing be based on adequate evidence. For example, I may believe that Hitler is dead, and it may be true that he is; but unless my belief of it is based on evidence sufficient to prove that he is dead, I cannot be said to know he is dead. Unless based on evidence, my belief, even if true, is a *mere* belief—a lucky guess.

If my belief is based on evidence but the evidence is not conclusive, then what I know is not that Hitler is dead, but that it is *probable* (in greater or less degree) that he is dead; and I am then justified, not in believing that he is dead, but only in *inclining to believe it;* and, more specifically, in inclining to this in a degree corresponding to the degree of probability defined by the nature or quantity of the evidence I possess. Inclination to believe that is so proportioned is what "rational belief" means.

In the great majority of cases, what, strictly speaking, we know, is not certainties but probabilities—though often probabilities so high as, for practical purposes, to amount to certainties. For example, when I go to my bank to withdraw money, the teller gives it to me because he believes I am the man who deposited it earlier. The evidence on which he bases this belief is that I look and speak and act like that man, as he remembers him, and my signature looks like that man's. But of course this is not conclusive proof, for I might have an identical-twin brother and the signature might be only imitated. But this is so unlikely that the teller feels practically justified in acting as if he knew that I am certainly the person who deposited the money, instead of, as actually, knowing only that my being that person is exceedingly probable on the evidence he has.

Since we have spoken above of "evidence sufficient to prove"—say, of something *E* being evidence sufficient to prove that *A* is *B*—it is necessary to make clear that this does not mean that *E* is sufficient to *convince* a given person, or everybody, that *A* is *B*; but means that *E* is a *completely reliable sign* that *A* is *B*. For proof generates conviction only in persons both informed enough to understand the proof and rational enough to surrender after attending to it such less well-supported contrary beliefs as they may until then have held. The reliability of signs, however, can be greater or less. Smoke is a sign, but not a completely reliable sign, of fire. Hence the evidence which smoke constitutes is not sufficient to prove that fire certainly is there, but only that probably fire is there.

In religious matters, questions of belief and of knowledge often arise. The purpose of the preceding remarks has been to make clear how the two are related. The relation may be summarily stated as follows: What we believe, we do not necessarily also know, for our belief may be *mere* belief, i.e., belief not supported, or insufficiently supported, by evidence. On the other hand, what we know, we necessarily also believe, for knowledge means belief adequately grounded in evidence;

and being evidence of something means being a reliable sign of that thing.

### How Knowledge Is Attained

Knowledge—that is, scient knowledge still—is attained by attention to such evidence as there may be of the truth or falsity of the proposition concerned. Evidence is of various kinds. Its various types, the nature of the factors which increase or decrease the degree of reliability of evidence of each type, and the precautions correspondingly necessary when one gathers evidence, are described in detail in books on logic, on scientific method, and on judicial proof.[1] Here we shall merely mention the principal types of evidence and briefly illustrate each. The list will not constitute a formal classification, for some of the types recognized overlap, but this is immaterial for present purposes.

One type of evidence is simple *perceptual* evidence—sometimes referred to as *observational* evidence. It is the kind of evidence I have at the moment of this writing, that, for instance, there is a pen in my hand. Observation or perception is easier and more reliable on some occasions than on some others; for example, when that which is to be observed lasts for some time instead of only for an instant; when the observer is cool, attentive, and disinterested rather than emotionally excited, distracted, or biased; and so on.

Another type is *experimental* evidence. It is the kind of evidence which tells us what effect results from a particular change in a given set of circumstances—for example, that lighting the gas under a kettle of water eventually causes the water to boil. For reliability, it is necessary that only one change in the circumstances be introduced at one time, since, if two or more should be made, the experimenter would then not know which one, or whether perhaps the combination of them, was responsible for the effect.

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[1] See, for example, Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1934); Morris Cohen, *Reason and Nature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1931); J. H. Wigmore, *Principles of Judicial Proof* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1913).

Again, there is *statistical* evidence. It is capable of revealing causal connections in cases where experimental procedure is not possible, or is not reliable because the circumstances of individual experiments are too numerous or variable for adequate control. The conclusion, for instance, that obesity, or that heavy smoking over many years, tends to shorten life, is based on statistical evidence. This type of evidence also can reveal correlations, more or less complete, between phenomena or characteristics not related as cause to effect. For example, that 100 per cent of ruminating animals have cloven hoofs; that approximately 4 per cent of human males have some form of color blindness; that the frequency of blue eyes is greater among fair-haired than among dark-haired persons; etc. Again, statistical evidence is the basis on which it is known that religious conversion of a certain type is more likely to occur among persons having certain characteristics—which we shall eventually mention—than among persons lacking one or more of them.

*Inductive* evidence, in the broad sense, is the sort of evidence which experimental or statistical facts provide for *generalizations* that go beyond the facts actually observed. For example, nobody has observed *all* the ruminating animals there are, but only a more or less extensive and diversified *sample* of them. The sample actually examined constitutes the inductive evidence on which is based the conclusion that all ruminants have cloven hoofs. It is a conclusion from some to all. The more numerous and diversified the sample, the more reliable is the conclusion.

*Deductive* evidence is the kind of evidence we have that, for instance, the writer of these words is mortal, if we know that all men are mortal and that he is a man. Or again, if somehow we know that *any* two free bodies are accelerated toward each other with a force inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them, then, deductively from this evidence, we know that two *given* free bodies not yet examined are so accelerated.

In these instances, the chain of deductive evidence is short, simple, and obvious. But there are many cases, for instance in mathematics, where, although equally rigorous, the deduction is long, complex, and recondite. Valid inference, in so far as deductive, yields conclusions which follow logically from the premises no matter whether these be true or false. But the conclusions are not deductively known to represent facts unless the premises from which they are deduced are known to be true.

*Circumstantial* or, as we may also call it, diagnostic evidence, is the type of evidence for an unobserved cause of some specific kind, which is provided by a plurality of observed facts all of which are such as would have resulted from a cause of the kind suspected. The conclusions such evidence yields are theoretically never more than probable; but the probability is often so high that, practically, it amounts to certainty.

It is on the basis of circumstantial evidence that we know, for instance, that a glacier once occupied Yosemite valley: various marks of the valley—its U shape, horizontal scratches on its walls, moraines, boulders down-valley of a type of rock that originates only much farther up, etc.—are features all of which would have been caused if a glacier had once been there; hence we conclude that a glacier caused them. It is again on the basis of circumstantial evidence—consisting of what are called the *symptoms* of a certain disease—that a physician knows his patient to be suffering from that particular disease. Again, what is known by physicists as to the existence and nature of the unobservable constituents of matter is known on the basis of circumstantial evidence. An observed streak in the vapor of a cloud-chamber is an item of circumstantial evidence that an "electron" has been emitted—an "electron" being a hypothetical entity, whose nature is defined in terms of capacities to cause certain kinds of effects, and whose reality is evidenced by the fact that certain *additional* effects, predictable deductively from the defining capacities but as yet unobserved, eventually are observed to occur as predicted.

*Testimonial* evidence is the kind of evidence which, for example, is provided for the fact that I wrote this book with a pen, not a typewriter, by my statement that I so wrote it. The reliability of testimonial evidence varies with a number of factors, such as the honesty and disinterestedness of the person testifying, the opportunities he had to observe what he reports, his intelligence and command of language, his competence in the field to which what he testifies about belongs, etc. Although testimonial evidence is often contrasted with circumstantial, the fact is that the former is but a particular kind of the latter, and a kind liable to error from special sources, such as dishonesty or bias of the witness, which do not affect the evidence provided by inanimate things.

When positive inclination to believe a proposition is brought about by attention to evidence of one or another of these types and is proportioned to the degree of probability that the proposition is true—that is, to the degree of probability determined by the nature and quantity of the evidence possessed—then such inclination to believe is rational, and constitutes *knowledge* that the proposition concerned is, as the case may be, probably true or certainly true. This, in general terms, is the manner in which scient knowledge is attained.

On the other hand, very little need be said concerning the acquisition of experient knowledge, for, by its very nature, it is capable of being gained by anyone only through his having personally the states of consciousness which are its content.

Experient knowledge of color is possible to the person born blind only if he eventually gains sight. Without this, he may know every fact *about* color, but cannot know color itself. The same is true of anxiety, love, jealousy, fear, pleasure and pain, thirst, bitter taste, dizziness, wonder, curiosity, serenity, doubt, confidence; and of every other emotion, sensation, feeling, attitude or mood. It is impossible for one person to describe to another the concrete nature of any of them or to make it known to him otherwise than by subjecting his sense organs to the stimuli which normally cause those sensations, or by putting him in the relationships to persons or situations in which those emotions, moods, attitudes, or sentiments normally arise.

The content of experient knowledge is always ineffable. One can, of course, give a name to each of its various contents, but utterance of the name will convey nothing to a person who has not himself had the kind of immediate experience named. Such names acquire a common meaning because, or if, as generally is assumed, the same stimuli or situations cause immediate experiences of the same kinds in all "normal" persons. The name "bitter taste" for instance, designates the species of immediate experience assumed to be caused alike in all "normal" persons under "normal" circumstances when quinine, for example, is put on their tongues. The denotation of "normal" is of course tacitly taken by each person to include him and the circumstances under which he has sometimes tasted quinine or some other bitter substance.

## How Belief Is Caused

In what precedes, one way was mentioned in which belief or positive inclination to believe can be caused, to wit, by attention to evidence sufficient to prove that the proposition believed is certainly or probably true. We shall call this mode of causation of belief *demonstration*, taking the word to cover not only the cases where reasoning is involved but also those where, as in perceptual evidence, there is simply *monstration*; that is, where, as the saying goes, "seeing is believing."

Attention to evidence, however, is psychologically effective in determining belief only when or to the extent that the person concerned is rational. Indeed, being rational *means* being such that one's inclination to belief responds to and is proportioned by the evidence. But inducements to be irrational are seldom absent and may be too strong to be resisted even in cases of clear perceptual evidence. We have all heard of the rustic at the zoo, who, seeing for the first time a giraffe, exclaimed: "There ain't no such animal." As Oscar Wilde remarked, "one is tempted to define man as a rational animal who always loses his temper when he is called upon to act in accordance with the dictates of reason."[2]

These remarks imply that there are ways other than demonstration in which belief—or, as the case may be, disbelief—is generated. They are often much more effective than is demonstration, but—and this is the point of cardinal importance—they cause belief just as effectively when what they cause one to believe is false as when it is true. Hence, many persons are firmly convinced of things which are nevertheless demonstrably false, and disbelieve some things which are demonstrably true. Except by accident, conviction parallels truth only when what brought about conviction was attention to adequate evidence of truth. This momentous fact needs to be kept in mind not only in connection with political or ideological propaganda and commercial advertising, but also in connection with what directly concerns us here, namely, religious belief.

Let us now consider the principal ways, other than demonstration, in which belief gets caused. We shall term them modes of *suggestion*, and define suggestion generically as *pres-*

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[2] Oscar Wilde, "Sebastian Melmoth," *The Prose of Oscar Wilde* (New York: H. S. Nichols, 1916), p. 665.

*entation of an idea to the mind in such manner or under such circumstances that no critical examination of the idea occurs.*

By an "idea" is meant here, of course, only the kind of idea capable of being content of belief, disbelief, or doubt; that is, the kind which is an "idea that" something is so, or as the case may be is not so. The basic psychological fact in connection with suggestion is that any such idea, which comes into the mind, *tends to be accepted, i.e., believed, automatically.* This means that, when it is *not* accepted, what prevents acceptance is only the consciousness, whether obscure or clear, that the new idea conflicts with certain others which the mind already harbors and believes. Hence, if there are none such, or if one is not conscious of the conflict, the new idea is automatically believed. This is what occurs when the new idea gets into the mind in the devious manner we have called "suggestion," instead of by knocking at the mind's front door, as it were, and submitting its credentials to critical examination before it is admitted. Its "credentials"—its titles to getting believed—consist of its logical compatibility with other ideas that, whether warrantedly or not, *are* believed; these being either ideas that had already won our belief, or ideas submitted at the time, which one had not considered before but which one accepts, and truth of which would constitute ground for belief of the new idea.

"Critical examination" of a presented idea means comparison of it with such other ideas of either of these two classes as one does believe, for the purpose of judging its compatibility or incompatibility with them. Compatibility or seeming compatibility of it with the existing beliefs is all that is necessary for *acceptance* of the new idea; but of course acceptance of it does not constitute *knowledge* unless those existing beliefs have themselves the status of knowledge; unless, moreover, they are not merely consistent with, but in addition logically support, belief of the new idea; and unless, finally, the new idea is believed *because* both of those conditions are satisfied.

It is important in this connection to remember that a set of beliefs might, as a result of critical examination of each of its items as it offered itself for adoption, be *internally* quite coherent—each item consistent with all the others, and some rationally supporting others—*and yet that every belief of the set might happen to be actually erroneous.* That is, such a thing as a logically systematized set of errors is perfectly possible. In the present section, however, we are not concerned with the truth or falsity of what is believed, but only with the psychology of belief, i.e., with the factors that are sufficient to cause belief.

A person's "critical apparatus" thus has two essential constituents: One, some set of acquired beliefs; and the other, the person's ability to discern the compatibility or incompatibility with them of any new idea presented. Any idea presented to the mind will be automatically believed if the first of these constituents is absent or weak, or if the second is defective or prevented from functioning.

An example of suggestibility dependent upon the absence or weakness of beliefs with which the new idea would clash is the state of affairs which more or less obtains in childhood. The author remembers a child who when still very young swallowed a cherry stone. The child's uncle, who had brought the cherries, told him that a cherry tree was then going to grow inside him. Some minutes later, the child, much distressed, cried that he could feel it growing! The cartoonist, Thurber, relates how as a child he took quite literally such current figurative statements as that somebody was "*tied up* at the office," or "*bursting* with anger," or "*green* with envy," etc.[3] Lack of a stock of established relevant beliefs is also what accounts for the frequent naïvete of the expert in matters that lie altogether outside his field of technical and of ordinary experience.

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[3] See *Reader's Digest* for May, 1943.

Belief tends to result also when, although the presented idea is inconsistent with some of one's existing beliefs, these are more or less vague or abstract but the new idea definite and concrete—the existing beliefs thus relatively weak and the new idea strong. An assertion—irrespective of its merits—tends to get believed if it is vigorously and confidently made rather than hesitantly; if it is made again and again rather than only once; if it is phrased in concrete, picturesque, dramatic terms rather than abstractly.

Another factor, pointed out by Peirce,[4] which makes for belief or, as the case may be disbelief, independently of evidence of truth or falsity of the idea concerned, is the fact that doubt—suspense of judgment—is an unstable, uncomfortable, unpleasant psychological state; whereas commitment—belief, positive or negative—is, aside from such pleasantness or unpleasantness as its particular content happens to have, in itself a stable, comfortable psychological attitude. This tends to hurry us into belief or disbelief without examination, or with only too brief and superficial examination, of the available evidence; or to make us resent and dismiss impatiently any consideration that would disturb our existing beliefs or disbeliefs and force upon us the discomfort of doubt.

Acceptance of an idea is facilitated if the idea accords with one's emotional state at the time—whether this be fear, optimism, depression, hatred, hope, love, jealousy, or other. Indeed, the emotion may father the idea as well as cause belief of it: hatred easily begets the idea that the hated object has hateful qualities, as well as causes belief of it; love readily generates belief that its object has lovable traits; jealousy, that its object is faithless and deceitful; optimism, that the universe is favorable; etc.

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[4] Charles Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," reprinted with some of his other articles in the volume *Chance, Love, and Logic*, ed. Morris Cohen (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1923).

Again, suggestion often occurs through action. As stated earlier, a belief, considered objectively, is a readiness to act, in relevant circumstances, as it would be expedient for one's aims to act in those circumstances if the proposition believed should happen to be true. In this sense it can therefore be said—even if only elliptically—that belief is incipient action. But conversely, an act is the germ of a belief, for a form of action habitual in certain circumstances to a person having certain aims implies tacit belief that the things acted on have certain properties: my dipping my pen into the ink implies tacit belief that capillarity obtains between ink and pen. Hence, as a person acts, and no matter how he comes so to act, so does he tend to believe no matter whether the belief be erroneous or true. This is clearly seen, and the practical implications of it for purposes of religious indoctrination stressed, in a recent book whose author declares that, as in the case of manners, so in that of religion "ritual is the first step . . . for a normal child . . . no matter what the religion may be"; reasons whether mythical or objective for the modes of behavior enjoined come only at a later stage.[5] And, we may add, those reasons are then likely to be "rationalizations" rather than genuinely reasons. That is, they are more likely to be inventions *ad hoc*—suppositions so fashioned as to support the beliefs planted in that psychologically effective but rationally unscrupulous dogmatic manner—than to be facts known and constituting evidence of truth of the beliefs.

The act which generates the belief may, but need not, be verbally induced. It may be spontaneous imitation of a perceived act performed by others. If a person stands on the sidewalk, intently watching the roof of the building across the street, others are likely to stop and do likewise and to believe that something interesting is about to happen up there. If one perceives many persons running away from a place, one is impelled to do likewise, and to believe that some danger is there. A child is taught by the example of his parents' behavior as much as by the precepts they voice or the particular acts they enjoin.

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[5] B. I. Bell, *Crisis in Education* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949), p. 133, and chap. viii, *passim.*

When an idea is presented verbally, there are various ways in which critical examination of it can be prevented, at least for a time, so that the idea is automatically accepted. For example, a speaker to whom one is listening may make in a plausible or impressive manner a statement which a moment's reflection would cause one to reject. But if, immediately after making it, he goes on to say other things which hold our attention, this robs us of the opportunity to reflect on his dubious assertion. We are then likely to accept it tacitly until such time, if any, as we happen to recall it and to give it critical scrutiny. Again, critical examination of a presented idea may be inhibited by wrapping it up in some question-begging epithet; that is, by labeling it in a manner classing it with certain other ideas which we strongly believe, or as the case may be, disbelieve; for instance, by labeling it "christian," or "atheistic"; "patriotic," or "subversive"; "democratic," or "communistic"; "progressive," or "reactionary"; etc. Or again, critical scrutiny of an idea may be prevented and belief of it induced by presenting it, whether truly or falsely, as being one held by some famous and admired person, although it may have no connection with the matters about which that person has special competence to speak. These, and other instances too numerous to list, eloquently illustrate the fact that belief of a proposition can be caused otherwise, and often much more easily, than by presenting evidence of the truth of the proposition concerned; and this not only when the proposition happens to be true, but just as well when it happens to be false.[6]

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[6] A description of various other devices capable of causing groundless beliefs or disbeliefs in unwary minds may be found in the section on Stratagems in Schopenhauer's essay, *The Art of Controversy,* trans. T. Bailey Saunders (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1896), pp. 15–48.

## Chapter 6

# SOME ATTEMPTS AT A DEFINITION OF RELIGION

The preceding chapters will, it is hoped, have served to make evident that the idea of religion anyone is likely to have formed is inevitably provincial if he has based it only on the nature of his own religion or even of the few others most widely represented in Western lands. With benefit of the perspective so obtained, we now approach the task of formulating a truly comprehensive conception of the essential nature of religion.

### Possible Derivations of the Word "Religion"

A source of suggestions, often useful in undertakings of this kind, is etymology. Unfortunately, however, the derivation of the word "religion" is uncertain. Some three or four different and more or less plausible etymologies have been offered for it by philologists. According to Webster's dictionary, the word is derived from *religare* in the sense of to hold back, bind fast; and taboo or restraint is then the essential idea behind the word. Lactantius, however, although deriving the word also from *religare,* conceived the bond meant as not of this restraining kind, but positive; that is, a bond or attachment to God.[1] But Cicero traced the word "religion" to *relegere,* meaning to read over again, rehearse; so that, by

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[1] Lactantius, "Opera Omnia," *Divinarum Institutionum Libri Septem,* IV, 28: *Hoc vinculo pietatis obstricti Deo et religati sumus; unde ipsa religio nomen accepit.* (By this bond of piety we are bound and tied to God; whence religion itself gets the name.)

"religious" persons would have originally been meant those who diligently reviewed, and as it were rehearsed, everything that had to do with the cult of the gods.[2] Rhys Davids, on the other hand, inclines to the derivation which would connect the word "religion" with *lex*, thus making it mean "a law-abiding, scrupulously conscientious, frame of mind." This derivation, he adds, "seems to be most in accordance with the conceptions prevalent when the use of the phrase began, and more in harmony with the similar expressions that arose under similar circumstances elsewhere . . . In India, indeed, the same word is used by the followers of every school of thought for law and for religion—the word Dharma, etymologically equivalent to the Latin *forma*, and constantly reminding us in its implied connotation of the English phrase 'good form'." Rhys Davids adds that "Law did not . . ., in that early time, mean legislation. It was rather custom, established precedent; and a sense of duty to the established order of things included and implied a reverential attitude towards the gods. This last side of the idea tended, even in Roman usage, to become predominant; and when the early Christians began to write in Latin, they not only limited the sense of the word religion to this part of its original meaning, but so used it in this limited sense as to fit in with their own theology, till it gradually becomes nearly a synonym first for Christianity, and then for Catholic Christianity."[3]

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[2] Cicero *De natura deorum* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1883), II. 28: "*qui autem omnia, quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent, diligenter retractarent, et tanquam relegerent, sunt dicti religiosi, ex relegendo, ut elegantes ex eligendo, tanquam a diligendo diligentes, ex intelligendo intelligentes, his enim in verbis omnibus inest vis legendi eadem, quae in religiosi.*" (But those who diligently reviewed, and as it were rehearsed, everything that had to do with the cult of the gods, were called "religious" (i.e., rehearsers), from "rehearsing" (*relegendo*), just as (others were called) "elegant" (i.e., selective, choosy), from "selecting" (*eligendo*); "careful" (*diligentes*) from "caring" (*diligendo*); "intelligent" (i.e., understanders) from "understanding" (*intelligendo*), for in all these words the force is to be read in the same manner as in "religious."

[3] T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism, It's History and Literature* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), pp. 1, 2.

## "Religiousness," "Religions," and "Religion"

Whatever may be the true derivation of the word "Religion," or the conclusions we eventually reach as to the generic nature of religion, we need to have from the outset a clear idea of the mutual relations of such expressions as "religiousness," "a religion," "religion," "having a religion."

The adjective "religious" or the abstract term "religiousness" is used in some instances to refer to a certain kind of attitude or concern, or to a person in so far as having it. But in other instances that adjective is applied instead to objective things or events connected with the expression or cultivation of that attitude or concern. The word is so applied when, in the classified section of the telephone directory, merchants who sell crucifixes, rosaries, prayer books, etc., are described as dealers in Religious Goods; or when one speaks of religious edifices, religious events, etc.

The expression "a religion," on the other hand, denotes any system of beliefs, practices, attitudes, feelings, institutions and modes of conduct that is religious in the sense of essentially connected with the religiousness of a given set of religious persons. It is in this sense that one speaks of Christianity, or of Buddhism, or of Mohammedanism, etc., as a religion.

The phrases "belonging to a religion," "having a religion," or "being a member of a given religion," however, do not always imply that the person about whom they are used is himself religious. Sometimes they mean only that he is nominally affiliated with the organization of a certain religion, or that he classifies himself with its adherents, for external reasons of one kind or another—perhaps because, although not himself religious, he believes that religious institutions perform a valuable function in society; or because of the political or the social desirability of being a member of some, or of a particular, religious organization; and so on.

Lastly, the noun "religion" is the name of that which a definition describes if the definition is comprehensive enough to fit all the religions, and at the same time differentiates each and all of them from any system of beliefs, practices, attitudes, etc., that would definitely be classed not as religious, but rather as political, or social, or scientific, or professional, or other.[4] The word "religion," however, especially in statements attempting to define it, is often employed in the sense of religiousness.

## Typical Kinds of Bias in Definitions of Religion

As stated in the first section of our second chapter, many attempted definitions of religion are inadequate because framed in terms of only the particular aspect of religion which happens to be central in the framer's own experience. On the basis of the chief kinds of such bias, as detectable in various definitions of religion, Leuba classifies the definitions he has collected into those framed from the intellectualistic point of view, from the affectivistic, and from the voluntaristic or practical.

Intellectualistic definitions are those which conceive religion as essentially faith or belief in certain things, or as knowledge or apprehension, whether clear or obscure, of those things. For example, in a definition offered by Max Müller, religion is said to be a more or less obscure perception or apprehension of "the Infinite."

Leuba here pointedly remarks that the chief service the word "Infinite" renders in a definition of religion is "to betray man's ineradicable megalomania";[5] and one may add that, in religious contexts and spelled similarly with capital initials, such other terms as "Truth," or "Power," or "the Unknowable," or "the Whole of Things," or "Ultimate Reality," or "Totality of Purpose," or "That Which Is," etc., are seldom anything but symptoms of the user's craving to revere, even *in vacuo* if need be; and invitations to the reader to do the same and stop trying to think. Of course, there are objects toward which reverence is an appropriate attitude, without which certain high values would be missed. But whatever is unknown or not understood is not *eo ipso* certified as worthy of reverence. The practice is all too common of giving a name to what one does not know, and of then mistaking the name for a piece of knowledge and innocently letting one's attitude be shaped by the connotations of the name one chose. It is as if a woman should name her as yet unborn baby "Patience" and rejoice that her little girl-to-be will have such a sweet disposition; thus wholly ignoring the quite equal possibility that the child will turn out to be a boy and an irascible imp.

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[4] For the need of distinguishing between such current phrases as considered in the text, and the typical kinds of bias in definitions of religion, see Vergilius Ferm, "Mistaken Notions," *First Chapters in Religious Philosophy* (New York: Round Table Press, 1937), chap. ii. My remarks in this and the next section borrow to some extent from Ferm and from J. H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), chap. ii and Appendix.

Affectivistic definitions of religion are those which conceive its essence as neither belief nor action, but as feeling. An episode mentioned by Coe and quoted by various writers quaintly illustrates the intensity of the emotion some persons experience in connection with religion. He reports that in the course of a camp meeting in western New York a number of years before, one of the participants testified somewhat as follows: "Brethren, I feel—I feel—I feel—I feel that I feel—I can't tell you how I feel, but O I feel! I feel!"[6] Schleiermacher's well-known statement that "the essence of religion consists in the feeling of an absolute dependence" is typical of the form of one-sidedness which would make emotion, or a particular sort of emotion, the core of religion.[7]

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[5] J. H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), p. 341.

[6] G. A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900), p. 215.

The conceiving of religion fundamentally in voluntaristic or practical terms may be illustrated by the following statements from the Humanist Manifesto: "Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant"; the religious "includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation—all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living . . . Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfaction of life." [8]

Besides bias of one or another of the three kinds just considered, defects of other sorts have vitiated many attempts to define the essence of religion. Some, for example, have postulated a "religious instinct"; but this, under cover of the term "instinct" taken in its vague popular not its scientific sense, amounts to a quite gratuitous assumption that religion or religiousness is, like hunger or thirst something wholly *sui generis*, and therefore necessarily impossible of analysis.

Again, some would define religion as meaning the beliefs, attitudes, practices, etc., of the particular religion which happens to be their own, dismissing all others as errors, corruptions, or superstitions. But obviously this is sheer provincialism, naïve or arrogant enough to ignore the fact that other religions can and do bring to their devotees values of the same verifiable kinds and as great as does to its own devotees the particular religion which the definer postulates as the only true one. Such procedure betrays a strange blindness to the fact that, with but few exceptions, Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists, Jews, and so on, are adherents of their respective religions not because, having examined the religions they reject and knowing them as well as their own, they prefer the latter—for they have rarely done this; but merely because they happen to have been born and brought up in, as the case may be, a Christian, a Mohammedan, a Buddhist, or a Jewish, etc., environment. For the vast majority of persons, it is with their religion as with their nationality, their language, their set of table manners, or indeed any contagious disease they come to have: they did not choose it but "caught" it.

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[7] Quoted by Leuba, *op. cit.*, p. 348, from F. E. D. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. edited by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1928).

[8] "A Humanist Manifesto" was first published in *The New Humanist* for May-June, 1933, Vol. VI, No. 3. Reprints are available from The American Humanist Assoc.

Again, the fact that all religions have some sort of code of ethics has lent color to the erroneous supposition that religion is morality—perhaps, to use Matthew Arnold's phrases, "not simply morality, but morality touched by emotion," or "ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling."[9] But morality can be touched by any one of several emotions—by pride, for instance, or by wrath, as easily as by love or humility; and certainly some of these moods of morality are anything but religious.

Aside from this, however, persons exist who are religious and yet immoral or even criminal: "Most criminals belong to some church and frankly admit the fact. The big majority attend church services every Sunday morning in the Maryland Pen . . . The Criminal is religious, the vast majority belonging to some established religious denomination."[10] On the other hand, there are persons who are moral, and yet not religious either in their own view or in that of acquaintances of theirs that have no semantical axes to grind.

Again, codes of ethics, and accounts of their theoretical foundations, can be and have been devised, which employ no conceptions of kinds that would ordinarily be called religious.

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[9] Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924), p. 18.

[10] Carl Murchison, *Criminal Intelligence* (Worcester, Mass.: 1926), p. 144. Quoted by H. M. Kallen, "Religious Education in Democratic Society," *Jewish Education*, XIII (1941), No. 1

Instances would be the ethics of Epicurus or of John Stuart Mill, which is based on pleasure and pain. Because of this it is sometimes characterized as "a philosophy of pigs"; but only by persons to whose minds the word "pleasure" brings the idea only of the sensual pleasures, which men as well as pigs can experience; and who forget that there are such things as the pleasure of a good deed, the pleasures of friendship, and the intellectual and aesthetic pleasures. A hedonistic ethics can take all these into account, and, without invoking religious sanctions, it can be, as Schopenhauer has convincingly argued, an altruistic ethics purely on the basis of the human fact of sympathy.

If, however, it should be contended that allegedly religious persons who are immoral are not *really* religious, and that moral but allegedly nonreligious persons *really* are religious, the reply would have to be that this is but a disguised invitation to treat henceforth arbitrarily as synonymous two adjectives, "religious" and "moral," which in fact are not so in ordinary language. Each of them is in fact applied to some persons, of whom the other is in fact denied; and the real question is, what does each adjective mean *as so applied and as so denied*. There is between ethics and religion a certain connection, which we shall eventually attempt to describe exactly; but that connection is not identity.

## Ferm's Proposed Definition

The writers of a number of relatively recent works on the philosophy of religion have been well aware of the kinds of error to which attention was called in the preceding section. They have accordingly endeavored to avoid them in their own attempts to formulate a comprehensive definition of religion or of what it is to be religious. Both for the sake of the positive contributions they make toward solution of the problem, and in order to bring out the nature of the difficulties to be overcome, we shall now examine a few of the more promising among the definitions proposed by such writers.

We may begin with the following one, offered by Ferm: "To be religious is to effect in some way and in some measure a vital adjustment (however tentative and incomplete) to w(W)hatever is reacted to or regarded implicitly or explicitly as worthy of serious and ulterior concern." By "ulterior," the author explains, "is meant that there is something which matters beyond one's immediate everyday horizon; there is involved the reach out toward those hinterlands which surround all of us," invisible, intangible, mysterious.[11]

This definition has notable merits. For one, it would allow room both for the theistic and the nontheistic religions. Again, although it does not use the word Value, the terms "vital" and "worthy of concern" imply that religiousness has to do with the safeguarding of values of some sort; and further, the term "ulterior" implies that although the object of the concern and of the adjustment is fateful in the sense of capable of affecting our destinies, yet it is other than the objects whose nature we already understand and whose operations we are therefore able to control at will or at least to anticipate.

The weak point of the definition, however, lies in the account given of the crucial, purportedly differentiating terms "ulterior" or "hinterlands." Ferm himself admits that there are various kinds of hinterlands, i.e., of things "which matter beyond one's immediate everyday horizon," for he repeatedly uses the word hinterland in the plural; but he does not tell us what differentiates the hinterland which is specifically *religious*—the matters which are of *religious* ulterior concern—from those which are instead of, for example, *psychological* ulterior concern (e.g., the subconscious), or *scientific* ulterior concern (e.g., the entities and forces of theoretical physics). The fact is that, for the great majority of men, who are not psychoanalysts, nor physicists, nor artists, nor financiers, nor statesmen, etc., the realms of the subconscious, of subatomic entities, of art, of high finance, of diplomacy, etc., are more or less mysterious hinterlands. They lie beyond the plain man's "immediate everyday horizon" and are for him matters often of serious concern, to which he attempts somehow to make more or less vital adjustments. Yet those realms are not *religious* hinterlands.

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[11] Vergilius Ferm, *First Chapters in Religious Philosophy* (New York: Round Table Press, 1937), pp. 61, 64, 65.

It appears, then, that what Ferm has defined is not religiousness specifically, but something which includes it and other things besides, and which we might perhaps call "imaginatively determined activity"; that is, activity (adjustment) motivated or determined by *beliefs* concerning things which we *imagine* but do not know or understand, and which we nevertheless regard as of serious concern to us.

## Wright's Definition

Let us consider next the definition of religion offered by W. K. Wright: "Religion is the endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values through specific actions that are believed to evoke some agency different from the ordinary ego of the individual, or from other merely human beings, and that imply a feeling of dependence upon this agency."[12] By "socially recognized" values, Wright means values which either are "recognized by many persons, if not by all, to concern the welfare as a whole of the social group," or else are "recognized to be morally right and proper for individuals to seek for their own benefit."[13] In the definition, the term "conservation" is meant to include also increase or enhancement of the values concerned; and the "dependence" meant is of a sort "akin to the dependence which man feels towards other human beings . . . and this feeling is present in religion, even in the cases where the religious agency is not attributed to or identified with a personal being." [14]

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[12] W. K. Wright, *A Student's Philosophy of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 47.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Wright's definition, like Ferm's but more explicitly, ties religion to the notion of value—to the fact that the values of human life are often in jeopardy, and to man's endeavor to safeguard them somehow, even when their fate is not directly under his command. This, so far as it goes, is sound; but in certain other respects the definition appears open to serious objections.

For one, it admittedly entails that "no one can make a religion for himself any more than he can devise a language of his own; religion is a slow development of group life and common experiences." [15] But although it is true very generally that one's religion is socially inherited, it by no means follows that this is of the very essence of religion and that no one can make a religion for himself. Rather, to do so is easily possible to the savage's or the child's vivid, active, and uncensored imagination, and is not unlikely to occur if a ready-made religion has not already been presented to him. The present writer, indeed, did make a religion for himself at one period of his childhood, and still remembers his moment of anxiety when, being instructed some time later in the Christian religion, he wondered whether he had not unwittingly sinned in the allegiance he had given to the religion he had earlier devised. Wright's grouping here religion with language seems rather ill-advised, since artificial languages can be and have in fact been devised by individuals—Esperanto by Zamenhof, Volapuk by Schleyer, Idiom Neutral by Rosenberger, Interlingua by Peano, Arulo by Talmey, Ro by Foster, etc.

Wright's insistence that the values concerned be "socially recognized" in one or the other of the two senses he specifies, again seems arbitrary. The only essential thing is that they should be positive not negative values; and, for religiousness, it is of no importance whether a person's conception of the positive values is due—as no doubt it is commonly in large measure—to the influence of the social group of which he is a member; or whether on the contrary it is due to the individual's own insights or experiences—for instance, the mystical ecstasy, which in many cases the group would not recognize as a positive value either for society or for the individual, but rather view as a detrimental form of mental derangement.

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

It is worth noting also that original Buddhism is not concerned, at least ultimately, with the conservation of the "socially recognized values." Rather, some of the "Ten Fetters," which have to be broken before Nirvana is attainable, consist of attachment to such values. The fostering of these values by Right Speech, Right Conduct, and Right Livelihood is essentially a means—a means of approaching and of aiding others to approach the ultimate aim of the religion, namely, attainment of the state of Nirvana. That this state has supreme value is something not "socially recognized"; rather, it is something to the recognizing of which society is to be converted. This remains true if, preferring to speak in the terms of Christianity, we say, instead of "Nirvana": "The Peace that Passeth Understanding," or "The Kingdom of Heaven within Man."

Again, Wright's defining of religion in terms of action, and indeed of evocative action—"specific actions that are believed to evoke some agency . . ."—unjustifiably makes belief and feeling only instrumental, corollary, or contextual, rather than intrinsic to religiousness. Moreover, not all religious action is evocative. Sacrifices, and prayer of the petitive kind are evocative; but not so is it "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world," which the Epistle of James declares to be "pure religion and undefiled." [16]

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[16] James 1:27.

Furthermore, even in the case of evocative action, to say that the agency evoked to secure the conservation of values is "different from the ordinary ego of the individual or from other merely human beings," and is one on which the individual feels dependent, is not enough to differentiate religious action from those actions of the physicist or chemist which evoke the agency of natural laws, for these are an agency "different from the ordinary ego of the individual" and from "other merely human beings"; and the conservation of many socially recognized values is dependent on evocation of the agency of those laws. Wright's statement, that, in religion, the dependence felt is "more akin to the dependence which man feels towards other human beings," and is so "even in the cases where the religious agency is not attributed to or identified with a personal being," seems intended to supply the needed *differentia* of religious evocative action; but the statement, when scrutinized, turns out to be nugatory if not paradoxical. In it, "akin" is a weasel word, for on the one hand it identifies the kind of felt dependence meant in no other way than as dependence on persons, and yet tells us that it is not necessarily this kind of felt dependence; while on the other hand the kind of dependence supposed to have in this paradoxical way been specified, is yet purported to differentiate the dependence meant from that felt on natural processes conceived as not personal.

Wright's definition does not require the agency evoked to be mysterious, occult, or supernatural, but only to be other than human; and thus does not exclude nonhuman natural processes, such as science on the one hand, and magic on the other, invoke. He justly regards the distinction between religion and magic, and their relation to each other, as fundamentally important; and yet he shuns attempting to define magic on the plea that the savage "does not think in logical terms so far as he employs magic," and that "an utterly illogical conception cannot be defined logically."[17] But, for one thing, although the conception of, for instance, a round square is internally contradictory and thus illogical, so that there can *be* no round squares, yet we *can* define with complete logical precision what kind of thing it is, which there can be no instances of, and which we mean by "a round square." We understand what it is so well that we can tell at once that a given figure drawn on the board is not a round square, and wherein specifically it fails to be one. Thus, even if "magic" should happen to be an illogical conception, this would not entail that it cannot be defined logically. But, as we pointed out earlier, the defect in magic is not with its logic—which in principle is the same as that of applied science—but with its theoretical premises, which presumably are false.

Wright's conclusion as to magic is, in any case, that magic is to be classed as religious when employed for good purposes, but as nonreligious when to evil ones. This basis, as we shall see later, is also that on which rests the distinction between "white" and "black" magic. Yet neither of these is in itself religious. Magical knowledge, if any, can, like chemical, physical, or other knowledge of causes and effects, be applied to purposes religion would sanction; but application to such purposes does not make magic religious any more than it makes chemistry or physics religious.

## Pratt's Definition

The definition proposed in J. B. Pratt's excellent book, *The Religious Consciousness*, is that "Religion is the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies." To refer conveniently to such power or powers, he uses the term "The Determiner of Destiny." He explains that, by an "attitude" he means

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[17] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

"that *responsive* side of consciousness which is found in such things as attention, interest, expectancy, feeling, tendencies to reaction, etc. Thus it is contrasted with . . . 'content,' the relatively passive element in sensation, the accepted and recognized. It presupposes always an object of some sort, and involves some sort of content; but it is itself a relatively active state of consciousness, which is not to be described in terms of the given but it is a subjective response to the given." It involves factors that belong to knowing, feeling, and willing; that is, it involves the whole man.[18]

Pratt states that by speaking of the religious attitude towards the Determiner of Destiny as "social," he does not wish to suggest that religion must have a personal object, but only that the attitude must not be "mechanical" in the sense in which the scientific attitude is sometimes said to be so, nor coldly intellectual. "It must have some faint touch of that social quality which we feel in our relations toward anything that can make response to us."

To call religiousness an attitude in the sense specified is evidently better, because more comprehensive, than to describe it in terms only of purposive action as did Wright's definition; but Pratt's statement just quoted, explaining what he means by the qualification "social," is open to much the same sort of criticism as is what Wright says about "dependence." The requirement that there must be in the attitude "some faint touch of that social quality . . ." represents an attempt to save from illogicality, by means of the word "faint," a compromise between on the one hand making the definition comprehensive enough to apply to the nontheistic religions as well as to the theistic, and on the other, making it such as to differentiate the religious from the scientific attitude. Just as, in Descartes's philosophy, the interaction he needed between mind and matter was really impossible on his premises, and he attempted to save it by saying that it did occur but only a little—only in the pineal gland; so here what Pratt tells us amounts to saying that the religious attitude is essentially personalistic, but only a little. But that little, no matter how little, remains radically incongruous to the nature of the Determiner of Destiny as conceived by the nontheistic religions. In particular, it is incongruous to the Determiner of Destiny conceived as Karma; for, as we pointed out in our discussion of Buddhism, Karma is not essentially reward or punishment for one's acts, thoughts, and feelings, but simply causality as applying to them too; the connection between cause and effect, however, remaining in their case as impersonal—as nonsocial—as it is in the phenomena of gravitation, magnetism, or electricity.

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[18] J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), pp. 2, 3.

### Toy's and Leuba's Definitions

C. H. Toy attempts in his definition no such inclusiveness as do Ferm, Wright, and Pratt. "The knowledge of the sequences of phenomena" he tells us "so far as the latter are not regarded as acting intentionally on him, constitutes man's science and philosophy; so far as they are held to act on him intentionally, the knowledge of them constitutes his theory of religion, and his sense of relation with them in his religious sentiment." Thus, "Religion is man's attitude toward the universe regarded as a social and ethical force; it is the sense of solidarity with objects regarded as Powers, and the institution of social relations with them." Religion "springs from the human demand for safety and happiness as the gift of the extra human Powers." [19]

This definition is manifestly inapplicable to the nontheistic religions. Buddhism, for example, is certainly no attempt to establish social relations with Powers conceived as having intentions.

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[19] C. H. Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions,* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1913), chap. i.

Leuba's definition, although as we shall see also inapplicable to Buddhism and to the other nontheistic religions, is of particular interest because worked out with much care and ingenuity to differentiate religion both from science and from magic. Religion, he tells us, is differentiated neither by specific impulses, nor by specific purposes, nor by specific emotions, but by the "standing in relation with, or attempting to make use of, a particular kind of power. The will-to-live comes to expression as religion when an appeal is made to a class of powers which may be roughly characterized as psychic, superhuman, and usually, but not necessarily personal." The aims of religion may be of any kind: "Any impulse, any desire, may lead to religious activity," but "as religion develops, . . . , certain human needs tend to be excluded from it and to appear exclusively in the secular life . . ." so that "religion serves more and more exclusively in the attainment or preservation of that which is not otherwise easily securable and of that which it is found most successful in securing." [20]

Leuba's conception is further clarified, and religion as he has defined it differentiated from magic and from science, by the distinction he makes between what he calls the mechanical, the coercitive, and the anthropopathic types of purposive behavior, which he illustrates by the example of a stoker respectively throwing coal into the furnace in order to make the ship run; walking backward around the card table after losing steadily, in order to change his luck; and falling on his knees and praying, in order to save the ship from sinking in a storm.

The "mechanical" type of behavior implies "the practical recognition of a fairly definite and constant quantitative relation between cause and effect. . . . It is in this form of behavior that science finds its beginning." It makes no reference "to powers endowed with intelligence and feeling."

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[20] J. H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), pp. 7, 8.

"Coercitive" behavior, which is Magic, purports to be making use of a mysterious power, different, as essentially qualitative, from the quantitatively definite and constant physical powers utilized in mechanical behavior; and different also from the powers peculiar to beings endowed with intelligence, will, feelings, and purposes. It may be pointed out in this connection that even persons who do not believe in magic sometimes use the word "magical" to refer to the great and seemingly mysterious qualitative powers of minute quantities of certain modern drugs, or of catalysts, etc.

"Anthropopathic" behavior, lastly, is the type of behavior man ordinarily employs in dealing with other men and with animals, as well as with superhuman spirits and with gods; for these are conceived as endowed with psychic powers of the same kinds as, even if greater than, those of men. Leuba here calls attention to the similarity of "our attitude towards a person exalted far above us with that assumed by the savage or even by the civilized man towards his god."[21] Religious behavior is thus only a particular instance of the anthropopathic kind of activity. It assumes that, like men, the invisible beings addressed can understand what is said to them, can be pleased or displeased, and can be favorably influenced by prayers, praise, evidences of humility, sacrifices, and other forms of worship.

Leuba maintains that gods are human inventions and have only a subjective existence, but that they are an easy, natural, and beneficial invention; for belief in them is effective in a variety of important ways even if they do not exist.

It is easy to believe that there are invisible beings, prayer to whom is effective in bringing rain, guiding the arrow, and controlling other physical processes, because clear proof of the inefficacy of prayers to such ends is so difficult to obtain.

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[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5.

Events of the kinds concerned often occur even when not prayed for; and the only way to prove or disprove a causal connection between the prayer and the subsequent event would be by statistical analysis of careful and extensive records of prayers and of what did or did not follow them. This, of course, is virtually never even attempted. Rather, apparent successes are remembered because valued, and widely reported because they make a good story. Failures, on the other hand, do not, and are not reported. To recount them would be to report one's self as having been a credulous fool or at best unworthy of divine aid. Besides, reasons for the failures—such as defects in the ritual, insufficiency of the sacrifice, impurity of the supplicant, etc.—are easy to imagine. The failures thus quickly get forgotten, and only the seeming successes are remembered.

A much stronger case can be made out for the efficacy of ritual and prayer in remedying the ills of body or mind; but Leuba argues in detail that the successes are adequately explicable, without need to postulate intervention by gods or spirits, simply in terms of the natural psychosomatic or psychological effects of suggestion. How powerful a force suggestion can be under favorable conditions is shown by experimentation with subjects under hypnosis. Here, however, the fact must not be ignored that there are some apparently very careful and well documented reports of striking healings of children too young to understand what was being attempted, and therefore to be suggested by it. But aside from possible healings of this kind, Leuba makes out an impressive case for the contention that it is not the gods, but the belief in the gods and in their aid, which works in the moral reformations of depraved individuals, the bodily healings, and the like, that are regarded as miraculous.

Leuba points out that religion has certain effects which, although unsought, are both real and of great value. Belief in ghosts, hero-ancestors, spirits, and gods stirs the imagination and "provides objects of attention able to summon forth in the struggle for life the hidden potencies of the mind." It is capable, for instance, of generating strong and practically efficacious feelings of optimism and confidence in the exercise of one's powers. "This dynamic value of religious belief," Leuba declares, "must be reckoned among the mighty influences contributing to the development of the human race." Moreover, the gods have been made the embodiment of (or we should perhaps rather say the sanctions for) the ideals of the community, and therefore, irrespective of whether they objectively exist or not, have been powerful factors in the work of social consolidation as against ruthless individual selfishness. The mere belief in the gods, therefore, even if they do not exist, produces results of the highest importance both for the individual and for society.[22]

As mentioned at the outset, this ingenious and carefully thought out conception does not fit the nontheistic religions. Leuba considers Buddhism in particular. We have to conclude that it is not a religion, he holds, "unless we can show that although original Buddhism disregarded gods, it made use, in its efforts to escape from the chain of reincarnation, of a psychic power transcending man." Then he adds: "On this point I can only say that certain methods adopted by Gautama and his early disciples suggest that they objectified Thought and Resolve somewhat as the psychotherapist objectifies Thought and Love, and the magician Will-Magic."[23] This idea, however, put forward thus half-heartedly, is evidently too little else than a supposition *ad hoc*, resorted to *in extremis*. It is even less plausible than is the idea sometimes urged that in Buddhism Karma has the same status as have the gods in the theistic religions.

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[22] *Ibid.*, chap. i, *passim;* and J. H. Leuba, *God or Man?* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1933), Parts I, II, III.

[23] Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion, op. cit.*, pp. 288–89.

The conclusion to which we find ourselves driven by this examination of a number of the more painstaking attempts to formulate a comprehensive definition of religion is that either original Buddhism, Jainism, and other nontheistic disciplines, such as those we considered, are not religions at all; or else that they are religions, and then that the various forms of theism constitute one great species, but not the whole, of religion. Yet those nontheistic disciplines are manifestly able to do for their devotees what is done—at least, verifiably not only supposititiously done—by the theistic religions for their more numerous adherents. We shall therefore regard the former no less than the latter as genuinely religions. To take the alternative would amount to declaring that religion is needed only by, and religiousness possible only to, those men—comprising, no doubt, a majority of the race—who as adults are still puerile to the extent of remaining incapable of finding serenity and inspiration to nobility otherwise than in the kind of relationship that obtains between a child and the loving and beloved parents he naïvely assumes all-wise and omnipotent.

## Chapter 7

# DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION IN TERMS OF ITS SOCIAL UTILITY

The definitions examined in the last chapter all regarded religion as an attempt by man to safeguard, obtain, or make up for, things which he values and perceives to be in jeopardy, absent, or lost, but which he finds himself unable to command either directly by exertion of his ordinary personal powers, or indirectly through the operation of laws of nature which he has discovered and happens to be able to put to work. Some writers, however, have attempted to define religion in terms of the kind of utility it actually has or tends to have, rather than, as did the writers already considered, in terms of the agencies it postulates and of the relationships it attempts to establish with them. In the present chapter, we shall consider two of the most interesting of these attempts.

One of them is that of Henry Rutgers Marshall in his book *Instinct and Reason.* He contends that religion is the manifestation of an instinct—the religious instinct. But although commonly the postulating of a religious instinct is but an easy, verbalistic way of evading the task of analyzing the nature of religiousness, this is not so in Marshall's case. He was quite familiar with the conceptions of instinct current among psychologists and biologists; and he supports his contention that there is a religious instinct by a careful, definite, and abundantly illustrated account of what he conceives an instinct to be, and by an equally careful account of the particular nature and function of the postulated religious instinct.

### Marshall's Conception of Instinct

Instincts, Marshall declares, "are forces within us which are organic, which appear in us because we are organisms; which lead us to undertake, without forethought, actions of a very complex nature involving the movement of many parts of the body in relations which are more or less fixed, actions which . . . are more or less thoroughly coordinated . . . Such actions . . . have significance for our welfare as organic beings." Instincts differ from habits in that the latter are acquired, learned; whereas the former are "born in us . . . inherited from our ancestors . . . acquired by our race because in the long run they have been, as they in general still are, valuable to life under the conditions which normally arouse them." [1]

Marshall states that he uses the word "instinct" in an objective sense, i.e., "to describe certain actions in animals and men as viewed objectively"; but that, since he will at times want to speak also of the subjective side of instinct, i.e., of the consciousness coincident with the instinctive coordinated activities, he will in order to forestall misunderstandings use for the objective and the subjective sides respectively the expressions "instinct actions" and "instinct feelings"—taking the word "feelings" in its widest sense.[2] The term "impulse," he uses, somewhat arbitrarily, to refer only to a form of consciousness—that form, namely, which is always "determined by the inhibition of instinct actions." In what follows we shall ourselves use it in its more common broader sense.

That the conception of instinct current among psychologists today is in substance much the same as Marshall's may be seen from the following fairly representative recent definition of instinct as "an organized and relatively complex mode of response, characteristic of a given species, that has been phylogenetically adapted to a specific type of environmental situation"—some instincts being "delayed" in the sense that they do not operate till some time after birth.[3]

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[1] Henry Rutgers Marshall, *Instinct and Reason* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), pp. 68 ff; see also p. 86.

[2] Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 85–86.

## Three Classes of Instincts

Doubts about instincts today are mostly as to which, among modes of response, are really instinctive, and which are really due to conditioning. This is also the sort of question likely to be raised concerning the three kinds of presumed instincts which Marshall then goes on to distinguish, as follows:

First are those "which function to the preservation of the individual organic life." [4] An example would be the hedgehog's rolling itself in a spiny ball at the approach of danger. These are the individualistic instincts. To certain of the instinct-actions of this class correspond the instinct-feelings called Love, Fear, and Anger.[5]

The second class of instincts distinguished by Marshall consists of those "which function to the preservation of the species to which the individual life belongs." [6] These are the instincts connected with reproduction: the instinct-actions of sexual pursuit and attraction, of more or less permanent mating, of nest or house-making, fostering of offspring.

The third class is that of instincts "which function to the preservation of . . . social groups . . ." [7] They appear most markedly in man, and relate "to the welfare of aggregates of individuals, to the welfare of tribes, of social groups of greater or less complexity and size." Examples are the instincts to cooperative, collaborative action; also to division of labor and specialization of the work of the individual; also, instincts which lead men to sacrifice personal and family interests in order to fight against an enemy of the group; or lead them to endure privations rather than steal from their fellows; to endure loss rather than avert it by murdering; to help wounded companions at the risk of their own lives; to engage in philanthropic activities; etc. All these forms of behavior, however shaped by conditioning, do, Marshall holds, have as genuine an instinctive basis as those of the two other classes.

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[3] H. C. Warren, *Dictionary of Psychology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934); articles: "Instinct," "Instinct-Delayed," p. 139.

[4] Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–26.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 127–38.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 139–59.

As individual cells and individual organs are parts of the bodily organism, and on the whole get along better *qua* parts of it than they could *qua* separate, so the individual man is a part of a *social organism*, which, however, is integrated only loosely; but this being a part of an organic whole implies and requires *subordination* of the egoistic, individualistic instincts to the needs of the welfare of the social organism as a whole. Only thus can the "instincts of social import," i.e., the altruistic instincts, have arisen and endured.[8]

## The Religious Instinct

The conception of instinct, and the threefold classification of instincts now outlined, are the basis on which Marshall introduces the idea of the religious instinct; but what he says about it seems independent in essentials of whether the several classes of impulses or patterns of behavior he has distinguished are genuinely instincts as defined, or on the contrary are in large measure acquired by the individual. Marshall brings the religious instinct into the picture as a fourth kind of instinct in the following manner.

Under normal conditions, the individualistic instincts contribute to the welfare of society; but they are strong and immediately impulsive, so that, when the stimuli to their exercise are themselves strong, the individualistic instincts easily preclude exercise of the social ones and become anarchistic: "Under special stress individuals tend to act as individuals rather than as members of a social body, and thus often some emphatic presentation to the mind of the opposition which individualism is making to the racial demands is required, or perhaps a summation of such emphatic presentations, in order to bring the racial impulses into play."[9] Hence, "perfection of racial life would seem to demand the evolution in the race of a Governing Instinct . . . an instinct of a new and higher order . . . which would lead to the strengthening of the social instincts, and to the subordination to them of the instincts of individualistic import . . ."[10] This instinct would belong to a fourth class, those, namely, "which deal with the regulation of relations which it is advantageous to foster between the instincts already formed."[11]

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[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 141–42.

Can we identify such a "governing instinct?" If we ask ourselves how the too common tendency to subordinate the ethical to the egoistic impulses may be held in check, the answer is that this may be done, "if in no other way, by the acquisition of habits of seclusion from the active world, or of voluntary temporary restraint from immediate reaction to the stimuli which affect us in this active world." But these "are the very characteristics that we find dominant in the habits connected with the expression of the religious feelings; and this in turn suggested to us that in Religion we might find the Governing Instinct sought for."[12] Its function is not suppression of the individualistic impulses, but restraint of their expression until the ethical impulses too have had a chance to make themselves heard.

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[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 197–98.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 207.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

## The Status of Religious Beliefs and Practices

Under this hypothesis, "the religious customs . . . are . . . all tools, so to speak, which Nature has used to enforce restraint" of the egoistic impulses for "this restraint is of the very core and essence of religious functioning."[13] This means that "the belief in the Deity as usually found . . . [is] from the psychological point of view an attachment to, rather than of the essence of, the religious feelings."[14] Hence "a man who . . . lives a life of restraint [of his egoistic, individualistic impulses], of listening for the [altruistic, ethical] voices within him, must be called a religious man in the very fullest meaning of the term, whether or not he belong to a recognized body in which religious customs are honoured; whether or not he be a member of any religious sect or church"; whether or not his habits of restraint be gained "through the direct absorption of dogmatic tenets."[15] Marshall's conception of the nature of religiousness is summarily expressed in the "Rule of Conduct" with which he brings his book to a close:

> *Act to restrain the impulses which demand immediate reaction, in order that the impulse order determined by the existence of impulses of less strength, but of wider significance, may have full weight in the guidance of your life. In other words*—BE RELIGIOUS.

## Merits and Defects of Marshall's Theory

What can we say concerning this interesting and ingenious conception of religiousness?

It has certain evident merits. One is that it would allow room for the nontheistic as well as for the theistic religions.

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[13] *Ibid.*, p. 327.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

Another is that it would define religiousness in terms of an important function religiousness actually tends to perform, rather than, like the other definitions examined, as an attempt to obtain, through appeal to imagined and possibly quite imaginary agencies, benefits one desires but finds one's self unable to command. Marshall's view, however, seems hardly acceptable as a whole, for several reasons.

One, already mentioned in passing, is its classing as instincts a variety of impulses which psychologists nowadays would contend are in large measure the products of "conditioning"—that is, of the influence of precept, example, approval and disapproval, and other environmental influences. In justice to Marshall, however, it must be said that he quite admits the reality of these influences, and contends only, even if a bit ambiguously, that the habits or patterns of behavior shaped by those influences have an "instinctive basis"—a contention which can be so interpreted as to make out a fairly substantial case for it, as against the contention that man's mind is born completely plastic and can, by conditioning, be molded into virtually any desired pattern. At all events, from the standpoint of the question as to the utility of religion, it seems a minor matter whether the four classes of impulses Marshall distinguishes are instincts and therefore innate, or on the contrary acquired.

A more directly relevant respect, in which his analysis of the function of religion is open to criticism, is its relative neglect of the psychological utility which religion indubitably has for the religious person. The emphasis of Marshall's view is throughout on the *social* function of religion—the individual benefiting from his religiousness chiefly indirectly, through promotion by it of the welfare, in which he partakes, of the society to which he belongs. This virtually ignores what the devotee's religiousness does for him *directly*—for example, the patent psychological benefits he obtains from prayer, as reported in detail by one of Pratt's correspondents, which we shall consider in a later chapter.

The most serious defect of Marshall's conception of religiousness, however, is that the impulse he describes, which he identifies with the religious impulse, is not really this but another. The seclusive, reflective impulse, which, among other results of it, gives the altruistic, social, ethical impulses a chance to speak and to influence action, is the *philosophical* much rather than the religious impulse. For, let it be noted, to give to the voice of the altruistic impulses a chance to be heard does not guarantee that, when heard, it will turn out to be a shout rather than perhaps only a whisper. Selfish action is not always thoughtlessly blind. There is, only too abundantly, such a thing as acting selfishly notwithstanding clear awareness of the harm to others the action will cause. The distinctive social function of religion—however ill-performed it often may be—is, we shall maintain, to *develop* or *strengthen* the altruistic impulses; not simply to give their voice, such as it may happen to be in given individuals, a chance to be heard. Reflection, and, through it, temporary restraint of the egoistic impulses, might well be necessary but is not automatically sufficient to subordinate these to the altruistic ones.

## Kidd's Definition of Religion

The conception of religion set forth by Benjamin Kidd in the book, *Social Evolution*, differs from Marshall's in a number of respects which Marshall discusses in some detail;[16] notably, in that Kidd defines religion as a form of belief rather than of instinct. Kidd's view resembles Marshall's, however, in the stress it lays on the role religion plays in counteracting, to the benefit of society, the egoistic impulses of man.

A religion, Kidd writes, "is a form of belief, providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing."[17] Again, more fully, "Throughout the existence of . . . [a social system that is a living organic growth] there is maintained within it a conflict of two opposing forces; the disintegrating principle represented by the rational self-assertiveness of the individual units; the integrating principle represented by a religious belief providing a sanction for social conduct which is always of necessity ultra-rational, and the function of which is to secure in the stress of evolution the continual subordination of the interests of the individual units to the larger interests of the longer-lived social organism to which they belong."[18]

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[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 333–38.

Kidd maintains that "No form of belief is capable of functioning as a religion in the evolution of society which does not provide an ultra-rational sanction for social conduct in the individual." From this it logically follows that "a rational religion is a scientific impossibility, representing from the nature of the case an inherent contradiction in terms."[19] There is an "inherent antagonism between religion and philosophy (the aim of the latter having always been to establish a rational sanction for conduct)." This statement is from a footnote in which Kidd refers, with approval, to G. H. Lewes' contention that the various attempts which have been made to establish a "religious philosophy" are innately impossible because the doctrines of religion have always been held to have been *revealed*, and therefore beyond and inaccessible to reason. So that (quoting Lewes) "metaphysical problems, *the attempted solution of which by Reason constitutes Philos-*

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[17] Benjamin Kidd, *Social Evolution* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), p. 111. All subsequent quotations of Kidd's views are from this edition. The book first appeared in 1894.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 108–9.

*ophy*, are solved by Faith and yet the name of Philosophy is retained! But the very groundwork of Philosophy consists in reasoning, as the groundwork of Religion is Faith. There cannot, consequently, be a Religious Philosophy: it is a contradiction in terms."[20]

It follows from Kidd's conception of religion that any set of principles which, like Comte's "Religion of Humanity," does not provide a superrational sanction for social conduct is "incapable, from the nature of the conditions, of exercising the functions of a religion in the evolution of society."[21]

### Some Criticisms

A number of points in this clear-cut and uncompromising conception of the nature of religion must now be examined in some detail. To begin with, the statement last quoted leads one to ask whether the incapacity it asserts, which that conception entails, is indeed a fact. The signers of "A Humanist Manifesto" certainly believe, and so do the many contemporary Humanists, that the Humanism defined in that document *is* capable of exercising the social functions of a religion in the evolution of society. The adherents of Comte's Religion of Humanity, although not numerous, would testify that it, too, is capable in their case of performing those functions. And there are many earnest persons who, animated simply by love of their fellow men, do devote themselves to more or less utopian schemes of social reform that promise natural "pie in five years" instead of the supernatural "pie in the sky" of theistic religions. No mention is made in this connection of original Buddhism and Jainism because, although they are nontheistic, Kidd would no doubt regard as "ultrarational" the sanction for moral conduct which their belief in Karma provides.

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 124, and note. Kidd's quotation from G. H. Lewes is from the latter's *History of Philosophy* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1883), Vol. I, p. 409.

[21] Kidd, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

Kidd's contention that only belief in some "ultrarational" sanction can motivate the individual to subordinate his interests to those of society is invalidated when we find individuals, and indeed substantial groups of them, such as just mentioned, being motivated to do so otherwise than by such belief. The most which can then plausibly be contended is that, for the *majority* of mankind, and at its *present* still low level of intelligence and of nobility, the required motivation can be provided only by belief in some "ultrarational" sanction, and indeed only when such belief is clothed in myths, images, and dramatic stories rather than in abstract terms. But it does not follow that only such belief can be religious, and can perform the social function of religion.

Another respect in which Kidd's definition, like Marshall's, is open to criticism is that it is framed in terms only of the objective, social utility of religion, and ignores the great subjective, personal utility which, for the most part independently of the other, religion has for vast numbers of devotees. Only a fraction of that subjective utility is traceable to the fact that, in so far as the individual shares the beliefs and practices, religious or other, prevalent in his social group, he gains the kind of psychological comfort which gregarious beings experience when thinking and doing alike. Much the greater part of the psychological value of religion to the devotee comes from the conviction that, in the ups and downs of his life, his essential values are really safe if he but maintains the right relation to such "determiner of destiny" as his religion acknowledges.

Kidd's definition might be objected to also as too intellectualistic because it categorizes religion as a form of *belief*. He acknowledges, it is true, that religion includes besides beliefs a variety of rules and observances, but he holds that these are corollaries, or are regarded by the religious as corollaries, of the beliefs; which therefore are the central thing.

The truth, however, would seem to be that, as between beliefs, practices, and feelings or attitudes, it is not a matter of "either . . . or . . ."; for the three are much too intimately connected psychologically to permit regarding one absolutely as central and the others only as peripheral. For one thing, as emphasized earlier, to believe something is to be ready to act, in relevant circumstances, in manners which would be conducive to success of one's purposes if the content of the belief should be true. Purposive action is thus enactment of a belief explicit or tacit. And, conversely, any form of behavior that becomes habitual under circumstances of a given kind begets a belief, though the proposition that is its content may remain unformulated. We have seen also that as a person believes, so does he tend to feel; and that, conversely, feelings both generate ideas about their objects and tend to make us believe them. The fact then is that no matter whether belief, action, or feeling happens at a given time to be psychologically prior in a person's case, the three, though distinguishable, are little more separable than the face, back, and thickness of a sheet of paper.

## "Ultrarational" Sanctions

Another term we must examine—and with especial care because it is crucial in Kidd's definition—is the adjective "rational," both as he uses it by itself and as figuring in his hard-worked opposite for it, "ultrarational." It appears to have for Kidd a double sense, both of the components of it rather arbitrary. By acting "rationally," he apparently means acting *selfishly*—acting for one's individual advantage without caring what the consequences of the act may be for society. On the other hand, when Kidd speaks of "ultrarational" sanctions, he means supernatural ones; so that, in that expression, "rational" means, in addition, *natural*, in the sense of being a matter of known or knowable fact; whereas being "supernatural" means being only imagined and hence being a matter of mere belief.

This double and peculiar usage of "rational" evidently begs the whole question; for, in fact, to act rationally means only to act as one's knowledge of means to ends dictates that one should act in given circumstances in order to achieve one's aims. The aims themselves, however, can be either egoistic or altruistic. The latter as well as the former can be pursued either in a rational, intelligent manner, or in an irrational, i.e., a stupid or blundering manner.

Moreover, the aims which would ordinarily be called "natural" in human beings—that is, those pursued instinctively and those always acquired in the normal course of life—are not all selfish aims. Human beings are, or become, interested in and more or less devoted to the welfare of certain individuals other than themselves. Romantic love, parental love, love of siblings and of friends are dispositions which arise spontaneously in circumstances of certain well-known kinds, and indeed not only among human beings but also among some animals. Among men, the same is to some extent true also of love of country, of race, and even of mankind. All cases of love are cases where the loving being spontaneously and willingly struggles, undergoes hardships, or makes other personal sacrifices for the sake of the welfare of one or more other individuals, without, in order to do so, the least need of belief in supernatural sanctions.

## Egoism and Altruism

As to this, however, some will probably urge that the cat who fights to protect her kittens and the hero who risks his life to save another's only do what it pleases them to do; and thus act as selfishly as do those who please rather to safeguard their own skins. This popular piece of sophistry, however, ignores the fact that to do what pleases one most or displeases one least in given circumstances constitutes neither selfishness nor unselfishness; and that the essential difference between these is a matter of *what kind of course* pleases one most or displeases one least in the circumstances—whether the course which benefits one's self but causes hardships to others, or on the contrary the course which benefits others even at the cost of hardship to one's self. The unselfish person is the person who finds happiness in giving happiness; whereas the selfish is the person who seeks happiness in getting things for himself irrespective of what the cost to others may be, i.e., even when his getting them is at the cost of unhappiness to others.

The empirical fact is that, no matter how persons have come to be as they are, few of them are either wholly egoistic or wholly altruistic; and that, in many circumstances in society, conflict arises in most persons between their egoistic and their altruistic impulses, or between their more narrowly and their more inclusively altruistic ones. Moreover, in most persons, their altruistic impulses in such circumstances are likely to be weak and their egoistic ones strong—the latter then prevailing and leading to such acts as tax-dodging, looting of natural resources, hoarding in times of scarcity, breaches of faith, theft, murder. For the welfare of society it is necessary that, in such circumstances, the egoistic impulses be repressed or subordinated and the altruistic ones supported or reinforced, by effective sanctions; that is, by punishments and rewards, disapprovals and approvals, threats and enticements, artificially attached by society to the forms of conduct which it believes respectively to subvert, and to foster, what it conceives as its welfare.

These sanctions are a device for making altruistic *conduct* "rational" (in the sense of providing an effective reason or motive for it) in cases where altruistic *feeling* or *impulse* is absent or too weak to motivate altruistic conduct. In so far as these sanctions are effective in causing such conduct, they automatically tend to foster development also of altruistic feeling and impulse, on the principle that as a person regularly acts, so does he eventually come to feel, and to feel impelled to act again. But the sanctions which society provides, and which, so far as effective in altering conduct, automatically tend thus to alter the man also, are natural not supernatural. They are the pressures exercised by the laws of the land; or, in matters too difficult or not important enough to regulate by statutes, then the pressure of public opinion.

These comments on Kidd's and Marshall's definitions, as well as comments made earlier on definitions of a different type, have to some extent adumbrated the positive conception of religion and of religiousness which, in the next chapter, will be explicitly formulated.

## Chapter 8

# WHAT RELIGION IS

The conceptions of religion examined in the last two chapters were some of the most carefully worked out among the many which have been offered by students of the subject. But although they make valuable contributions toward a definition both comprehensive of all known religions and exclusive of types of experience definitely denied the name of religious, nevertheless each of those conceptions was found open to serious objections of one kind or another. We must therefore now attempt to formulate an account of the essence of religion that will be free of the shortcomings we noticed and yet that will do justice to the positive insights contained in the definitions we discussed.

### Religion to Be Defined in Terms of Its Functions

The great diversity of religious beliefs and practices, of which samples were given in Chapters 2 and 3, suggests that the essence of religion cannot consist of any particular set of them, but, as Marshall and Kidd believed, must rather be conceived ultimately in terms of certain important functions which it is the distinctive business of religion to perform. Among these, however, must be reckoned not only the social functions emphasized by those two writers, but also, as we pointed out, certain personal functions of great value in the private life of the individual. We shall say, then, that a religion is any set of beliefs that are matters of faith—together with the observances, attitudes, injunctions, and feelings tied up with the beliefs—which, in so far as dominant in a person, tend to perform for him privately, and for society through him, the respective functions we shall describe. These, jointly with that kind of agency for performance of them, are what in the last analysis differentiates religion from the other great dimensions of human culture.

In what we shall say, the belief aspect of religion will be taken as central, rather than that of practices or of feelings. To justify this course, a few words are called for at this point.

### The Sense in Which Belief Is Central in Religion

In commenting on Kidd's similar course, we pointed out that belief, action, and feeling or attitude are so intimately connected that each as it occurs tends to generate the others. Therefore neither religious beliefs, nor religious practices, nor religious feelings can well be held to constitute alone the essence of religion or of religiousness. But, if man is indeed *homo sapiens,* so that the capacity broadly denoted by the word "reason" is what basically differentiates him from the other animals, then, to the extent that, in matters of religion, he functions as a human being rather than, as would an animal, blindly—to that extent belief is the central element in his religion. This follows from the fact that man's "rationality" consists in his capacity to *act from reasons,* whether good or bad; that is, from conceptualized beliefs and conceptualized remote goals, rather than only, like the animals, from concretely present stimuli, "drives," and habits. Man's religious beliefs thus function in him as reasons or at least rationalizations—as motives, explanations, and sanctions—for his religious practices and feelings and for the conduct and attitudes prescribed by his religion; its observances and ritual serving to vivify the beliefs and to induce in him feelings, attitudes, and impulses consonant with the content of the beliefs.

The beliefs are then for man what gives meaning to all the other aspects of his religion. Without the beliefs, he might go through the motions of it, but only as an automaton. To an observer of his outward behavior, he might still seem religious, but would in reality no more be so than a parrot that had been taught to recite the "Lord's Prayer," or an ape that had been taught to kneel and cross himself.

## The Social Function of Religious Beliefs

With regard to the social function of religious beliefs it seems to the author that Marshall and Kidd rightly discerned its essence notwithstanding the defects we found in their accounts of religion. We shall, however, now formulate in our own terms the nature of that function.

To begin with, let us notice that men can be ranked in respect to degree of spiritual development on the basis of predominance in them of one or another of four kinds of impulses—the malicious, the egoistic, the equitable, and the altruistic. Whether or how far these dispositions are native or on the contrary acquired is not important for our present purpose, but only the fact that in most men but in different proportions, each of them exists.

The lowest of those four is malice. It is the impulse to do evil disinterestedly. A man is malicious in so far as he takes pleasure in causing trouble, doing mischief, or inflicting suffering on others not as means to any objective advantage or profit to himself, but, even sometimes at cost to himself, for the sheer gratification which the pain or discomfiture of others, or the prospect of it, gives him. The bully, the sadist, the practical joker, the vandal, the scandalmonger, exemplify malice in various degrees.

Next above malice comes egoism. The egoistic or selfish man is he whose course is shaped by the question "What is there in it for me?" The causing of harm or pain to others is not for him itself an end; but if it happens to be entailed by the kind of means he employs to benefit himself, knowledge of this does not deter him from employing them. On the other hand, if doing something that is of value to others promises to benefit him, he is equally ready to employ this means. His services to others thus are not gifts but investments; just as his disservices to them are not malicious but only incidental to the pursuit of goods for himself.

The next higher type on the spiritual scale is that of the just man—the equitable, fair, righteous man. His rule of life in dealing with his fellows is that of the "square deal"—no less, but no more. He is scrupulous to give fair compensation for whatever benefits or services he receives from others and for whatever damage he may have done them; but equally scrupulous to obtain just recompense for the services he renders and for such harm as others may have done him. He is bent equally on doing his duties and on getting his rights. To the disposition of the merely just, righteous man, generosity on the one hand, and gratuitous malevolence on the other, are both foreign.

The spiritually highest disposition is that of the type of man we may call good—that is, kind, charitable and generous in spirit, benevolent and disinterestedly beneficent. He is the person who does what he can for the good of others without thought of thereby winning their gratitude or other reward—who does it simply because he values their welfare and desires to promote it, even if need be at cost to himself. The good man, as the term is being used here, is thus the unselfish, altruistic man. He is the polar opposite of the malicious man in that although each acts without thought of ulterior benefit to himself, yet the kind of end each pursues is the very contrary of that pursued by the other—the malicious man doing evil simply because the suffering or discomfiture of others gratifies him; and the good man doing good simply because he prizes the happiness and well-being of others.

It will be convenient at some points in what follows to refer together to the equitable and the altruistic impulses, and likewise to the malicious and the egoistic together. We shall then term the latter two the *mean* impulses; and the former two the *noble* or *magnanimous*, for even to give another person what is justly due to him is magnanimous in some degree if one could have avoided doing so.

The effects the four kinds of dispositions just described have on the welfare of society vary with circumstances; but, except by accident, the malicious impulses evidently tend to be maleficent. The selfish impulses, in so far as they stimulate the development of intelligence and resourcefulness, of useful inventions, of efficiency in production and in services, can contribute a great deal of value to society. There are many occasions on which the individual gains most for himself by doing things that are of value to his fellows, who reward him for it economically or otherwise; and there are also numerous occasions on which a man's private endeavor to benefit himself costs nothing to other men, even if it does not benefit them directly or perhaps even indirectly.

Granting all this, however, the fact remains that selfishness is the factor responsible for the major part of the immense amount of suffering which arises out of the relations of human beings to one another—selfishness, more than malice and probably more also than the ignorance or stupidity which so easily subverts even the most magnanimous intentions.

Society therefore takes measures to curb to some extent the meanness of individuals and of groups. It attempts to confine self-seeking within limits consistent with justice by codifying what it regards as the more important kinds of occasions for this, and by providing legal sanctions to motivate equitable conduct on such occasions both in persons not discerning enough to perceive what would be just, and in persons who do perceive it but in whom inner impulse to behave equitably is not strong or prompt enough to moderate selfishness. Indeed, society formally compels not justice only, but charity also, indirectly and to a varying extent, when, through taxation, it provides for the destitute, the ill or infirm, the old, the unemployed, and other more or less helpless persons irrespective of whether their earlier services, if any, to society have merited such recompense in addition to what they may have received at the time. Moreover, society, not formally but through the spontaneous pressure of public opinion, provides some motivation for just or for charitable conduct in many cases too special, or whose public importance is too narrow, to warrant codification and legislation.

But that these various forms of social pressure are often ineffective even on occasions of the specific kinds they have in view is all too evident. The laws, both of the written kind and the unwritten, often are successfully evaded by the clever, the strong, or the influential. Moreover, neither the law nor public opinion can compel a man to be "honest in the dark" —that is, to act virtuously on occasions when he believes that an unjust or a callous act advantageous to him will remain undetected.

In the light of these considerations, the social function peculiar to religion becomes evident. It is to provide motivation for just or altruistic (and therefore socially beneficial) conduct, in those cases where the interests of the individual conflict with those of the group and where the forms of social pressure we have mentioned fail to provide such motivation, whether because they are not strong enough or because they cannot be brought to bear. To contribute in this manner to mankind's progress toward Utopia is religion's distinctive social role, however ill or well it happens to have actually played it. Utopia is the state of a society where the relations between its members are governed on the one hand by intelligence and knowledge, and on the other, among equals by justice and the old-fashioned virtues which embody justice in conduct; and, among unequals by disinterested love—ἀγάπη, *caritas*—which implies both active kindness and gratitude for kindness. Utopia as so conceived is realized on a small scale by the state of affairs which obtains within the family at its best. "Kindness," it is worth noting, originally means the sort of disposition natural among persons who are kin.

## How Religious Beliefs Motivate Socially Beneficial Conduct

Evidently, belief in the all-seeing eye of a powerful God provides for those in whom it is lively a strong motive to refrain from the antisocial acts this God forbids and to adhere to the modes of conduct he enjoins, even at times when men are not watching or lack power to punish or reward. Similarly, just and beneficent conduct is promoted in the Buddhist by his belief that a man's every act, thought, and feeling automatically brings to him sooner or later good or evil fruits, according as it was itself of a good or an evil kind. The sanction such articles of faith provide tends to make up for the too common weakness, limited scope, and delayed voice of the individual's nobler impulses.

Irrespective, then, of what the particular content of an item of faith happens to be, the social mark of its being a religious belief consists in the tendency of it to operate in the direction just described. In most of the religions the beliefs which so act have been theistic. That is, they have been beliefs in the existence of gods or spirits of various kinds, or of a single god conceived either, like the plural gods of the polytheisms, in more or less crudely anthropomorphic or at least personalistic fashion, or else pantheistically and rather vaguely. But crudity or vagueness of the idea of a divine being or beings does not impair its social or its personal utility, which in either case is utility essentially for practical not for theoretical purposes. Leuba, on the basis of answers to a questionnaire he had sent to various persons, concludes that, "preposterous as it may seem it is yet true that [man] cares very little who God is, or even whether He is at all . . . *God is not known, He is not understood; He is used.*"[1]

The use society makes of the gods is as prescribers of individual conduct supposedly beneficial to society, in situations where the interests of the individual conflict with those of the group. In original Buddhism, on the other hand, this same social function devolves on belief in the impersonal and supposedly quite automatic operation of Karma.

There are, however, persons in whom the inner impulse to justice and beneficence is strong and widely inclusive. Such persons, whom the poet Friedrich Schiller called beautiful souls, act justly and beneficently thus by inclination, rather than from the pressure of human laws or of theistic or other religious dogmas. They may or may not adhere to some organized religion; but even if they do not, they are as Marshall maintained *practically* religious in that they normally treat their fellow men in the very manners which it is the social function of religion to motivate. In their case, *orare* consists in *laborare*. Among such persons are doubtless to be included some of the adherents of Comte's Religion of Humanity and of contemporary Humanism.

There are other and more numerous persons, however, who, whether or not members of such religious groups, likewise militantly repudiate the beliefs of the dogmatic religions, or at least have lost or perhaps never acquired them; and who ordinarily deal fairly or generously with their fellow men not, like the "beautiful souls" of Schiller, because their inner impulse to do so is exceptionally strong, but rather because they happen to be so fortunately situated that temptations to act meanly are fewer or weaker in their case than in that of most men. Just as it is easy not to steal when one is in jail, so it is easy to behave magnanimously when one can easily afford it.

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[1] J. H. Leuba, "The Contents of the Religious Consciousness," *The Monist*, XI (January 1901), p. 571.

The articles of faith of such persons, and likewise of those who are really "beautiful souls" but not adherents of the theistic religions, are of much more abstract nature than those of these religions. That Humanity is the true Great Being and is worthy of worship, and that worship of it consists in working for its welfare, is the essence of the faith of the adherents of the religion Comte founded;[2] and the positive part of the faith of the contemporary Humanists is substantially the same even if they commonly phrase it in slightly different terms.[3]

## Conduct and the Education of the Heart

The thesis put forth in the preceding sections has been that the social function of religious beliefs is to motivate the individual to act justly or generously notwithstanding his mean impulses, in cases where the latter are stronger than his noble ones and where fear of the laws or of public opinion fails to motivate him so to act. As pointed out in the last chapter, *conduct* that is noble in this sense is one thing, and noble *feeling or impulse* is quite another. Such conduct can very well be motivated by considerations of self-interest—for example, by fear of hell or hope of paradise in a future life. And what is directly important for the social welfare, on occasions where immediate individual interest conflicts with public interest, is that actual conduct shall subordinate the former to the latter, not that such conduct be motivated by noble impulses rather than by the long-range egoism that aims at laying up treasures for self in an eventual heaven.

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[2] Auguste Comte, *Catéchisme Positiviste ou Sommaire Exposition de la Religion Universelle*, Edition Apostolique (Paris: Apostolat Positiviste, 1891): "the holy formula of positivism: *Love as principle, and Order as basis: Progress as aim*" (p. 55 and title page). Again, and more briefly: "*To live for others*" (p. 47).

[3] See for instance *A Humanist Manifesto* cited in Chapter 2; *A Humanist Affirmation*, by Bernard Fantus; etc.

Nevertheless, religious beliefs, in addition to providing the believer with such egoistic motives for noble conduct, can genuinely bring about "education of the heart," that is, development of noble feelings and impulses; and this may well be considered a part of the social function of religion since such feelings and impulses too, when present, do influence conduct. The capacity of religious beliefs to educate the heart and not merely the hand or the purse rests on the fact to which attention was called earlier, that as a person believes, so does he tend to act; that as he acts, so does he tend to feel; and that, if the feelings or other results please him, then, as he did act, so does he henceforth tend to feel inwardly impelled to act again on similar occasions. It is said that virtue is its own reward, and this is true at least in the sense that the kind of feeling that goes with virtuous action is a happy feeling, not an anxious one as in the case of vicious. But to discover the reality and the nature of that inherent reward of virtuous action, it is necessary to have been somehow induced to *practice* such action, even if at first out of other than virtuous motives. The inherent reward reveals itself only in the process of earning it.

These psychological facts have a consequence worthy of attention in these days, when many of the charities we pay for are performed not by us in person nor by voluntary contributions from us, but by public agencies which finance those charities with funds taken from us willy-nilly by taxation.

It may be said that charities, when so financed, are more widely and equitably performed than when left to the initiative of individuals; and this is doubtless true in cases of certain kinds. Also, it may be said that, in his very voting, the individual—or rather the individual who voted *for* such taxation or *for* the legislators who eventually voted it—was personally acting charitably even if in very distantly deputized manner. But the fact remains that charity thus compulsory or resulting from the initiative of remote delegates does not, as a matter of psychological fact, *feel* the same to the individual who ultimately pays for it; that is, it does not generate and cultivate in him the altruistic feelings and impulses which tend on the contrary to be generated by charitable acts done personally and voluntarily, even when done out of subtly egoistic motives.

Moreover, the psychological effect of charitable benefits on the recipients of them too is very different in the two cases. When these benefits are paid out impersonally, by public agencies out of public funds, the gratitude and affection, which are the just and otherwise the natural responses to generosity and kindness, are not generated; and thus no more contribution is made by such charity to the spiritual education of the recipients than to that of the taxpayers out of whose pockets the funds ultimately come.

These remarks on the difference in spiritual results between the personal and voluntary, and the impersonal and compulsory forms of charity, do not imply that one of these forms should be discarded and only the other retained. Rather, it is evident that each has some advantages of its own, but that a price, even if of a different kind, is paid for these in either case. To make human beings reasonably comfortable in old age or in disability of other sorts is important; but to make human beings good—to foster in them the twin kindly impulses of generosity and gratitude—is important too.

The psychological effects just discussed, which religion's performance of its social function tends to have on the individuals in whom socially beneficial conduct is motivated by religious beliefs, form as it were a bridge between what religion does for society and what it does for the individual believer. We shall now consider specifically the latter.

## The Personal Rewards of Religious Conduct

Is religion's fostering of magnanimous impulses in the individual, a disservice as Kidd believed to the individual as individual, though a service to society? Or is it a service to the individual as well as to society?

There is no doubt that altruism and even honesty have their costs to the person who practices them: they cause him to make sacrifices of various kinds, which he was under no necessity to make. But they also have rewards, even if these are not usually rewards in kind for what has been sacrificed.

One of them is psychological. It consists, as mentioned earlier in passing, in the inherently happy, peaceful, serene character of magnanimous feelings and impulses; whereas envy, greed, malevolence, jealousy, selfishness, are inherently unhappy, anxious states of mind. To hide them and disguise one's motives calls for constant watchfulness, and for lies and deceit; and this generates wearing tension instead of the inner peace which comes with their opposites.

Moreover, it is hard to conceal selfishness and ill will successfully, and when they are detected in us they beget in others aversion, distrust, contempt, or enmity. In this way, a person's mean feelings and impulses tend to create for him an unpleasant and difficult human environment; whereas honesty, kindness, helpfulness and the like beget in others esteem, trust and good will, which make for the person who calls them forth a satisfying and favorable human environment.

The sort of social conduct which religion enjoins upon the individual brings him still another reward, even if only indirectly and in the long run. It is that he himself, as well as others, benefits to some extent from the felicitous general state of affairs which such conduct on his part contributes to establish in the group to which he belongs. It is, however, only in the rare cases where some heroic act by the individual saves his group from disaster, and where his life is not lost in the act, that the benefit from it which he reaps *qua* member of the group, is likely to amount to more than a slight mitigation of the personal sacrifice he makes. But it is of the very nature of the altruistic spirit not to count either the costs or the rewards of the acts it prompts. Love keeps no ledgers. Magnanimity, by transmuting sacrifice into glad gift, robs it of pain.

## The Personal Function of Religious Beliefs

The personal benefits mentioned in the preceding section do not derive directly from the individual's religious beliefs, but rather, indirectly, from the conduct these beliefs motivate, and from the feelings and impulses built up in him, and called out in others, by that conduct. These benefits are therefore contingent rewards for such conduct, rather than automatic psychological effects of the beliefs themselves. But religious beliefs, in proportion to their depth and firmness, are of themselves capable of inducing in the believer a blessed state of mind of a unique kind, which enables him to maintain a degree of detachment and equanimity through both misfortune and good fortune. To generate it is the distinctive personal function of religious belief.

Concerning that inner state, Pratt writes as follows:

> When one compares the deeply religious and spiritual person with the best and bravest of those who are not religious, one sees, it must be confessed, that the former possesses something which the others lack . . . he has a confidence in the universe and an inner joy which the other does not know. He is, perhaps, no more at home in this world than the other (perhaps he is not so much at home here), but he seems more at home in the universe as a whole. He feels himself in touch, and he acts as if he were in touch, with a larger environment. . . . he has an inner source of joy and strength which does not seem dependent on outer circumstance, and which in fact seems greatest at times when outer sources of strength and promise fail. He is, therefore, able to shed a kind of peace around him which no argument and no mere animal spirits and no mere courage can produce. . . . The peace and power in question follow, by

> regular psychological laws, from a certain form and intensity of belief and a certain emotional experience.[4]

Religion, as we know, has been called "the opium of the people"—meaning that, like opium, it brings beautiful visions, and that these distract those who believe them from doing what they could do to remove the causes of their earthly wretchedness. Hope for a distant but glorious future, in which the last of this earth shall be the first, begets in them the resignation which inhibits action and dooms them to endure their present misery.

But, evidently, two things at least are wrong with this account of religion. One is that even—and indeed especially—in the contemporary "worker's paradises" which would discard the religious "opium," the individual again and again finds himself tormented by conditions which he is totally powerless to alter. Some of these are imposed on him by the existent political, social, or economic order. Others are personal—for instance, illness, accidents, unrequited love, the death of friends, and other personal frustrations. Even when the individual can and does do something toward removing the sources of his suffering, what he does often turns out not to be enough. The skill of the best physicians does not always bring back health or save the life of a loved one. However practical, clever, or strong a person may be, there are always limits to his control over events, and occasions on which he has to endure pain with what resignation he can muster.

The other thing wrong with the invidious comparison of religion to "opium" is that religion, like opium, does not merely bring dreams, but also has the capacity to deaden pain; and the helpless individual does desperately need an anaesthetic to alleviate the pains which the situations just referred to impose on him.

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[4] J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), pp. 35–36.

Religion can bring to the fervent devotee calm in time of danger, endurance in time of adversity, courage in time of despair, self-respect and dignity in time of obloquy or frustration. It can make the believer feel that the tribulations of life are not important intrinsically, but only as exercises for and tests of the spiritual growth he is on earth to achieve; so that the significant thing is not whether the test is difficult but whether he passes it with a good mark. For Epictetus and his fellow Stoics, as well as for the faithful of Christianity, of Buddhism, and of other of the higher religions, to become "perfect," or at least to approach perfection, is the really important thing in life. Faith that whatever comes to man of trial or of joy comes to him from God, and that God is loving and knows best what is for each man's ultimate good, so that whatever he sends is somehow right; or again, in nontheistic religions like original Buddhism or Jainism, belief in Karma—implying that no effort to perfect one's self or to aid others is ultimately wasted, that the penalties owing for past vice can be canceled by earning the rewards of virtue, and so on—all such religious beliefs have the capacity to detach the devotee in some measure from the surface of life, where human welfare seems to consist only in comforts, possessions, position, and outer attainments, and to attach him instead to forms of action that improve both the lot of others and his own character, and bring him inner peace and assurance.

But the personal function of religious faith is not limited to times of adversity. Whereas in worldly misfortune it operates as a tonic, it works on the contrary as a sedative in times of worldly good fortune. It then gives the religious man a measure of humility on occasions of pride, and of prudence in times of success; and a sense of responsibility in the exercise of power. Fear of God or of the gods, or of Karma, conscience, or the Furies, begets conscientiousness and moderation in the judge, the ruler, the boss, or the man in any other place where his decisions are fateful for the physical or psychological fortunes of his fellow beings. Such fear makes man feel that power, wealth, position, youth, beauty, health, talents, and other earthly glories are not private possessions, simply to be enjoyed and used for one's self; but are things to be held in trust—opportunities or instruments to be used for the good of mankind. Deep religious belief, in so far as it inhibits or mitigates arrogance, harshness, tyranny, snobbishness, or arbitrariness can bring to those high on the ever shaky summits of worldly life a degree of blessed serenity; just as it can —but through humility, hope, and trust—to those down in the sticky depths of misfortune. It is interesting to notice in this connection how closely equivalent for such psychological purpose are on the one hand belief in a just, all-seeing, and all-powerful God; and, on the other, belief in the impersonal but equally ubiquitous and inescapable operation of Karma. Even in respect to the attribute of mercy, as well as of justice, believed to be possessed by that God, the pragmatic equivalence appears to hold; for, to the sinner whose repentance is genuine enough to express itself in acts of reparation, mercy is but justice; and is the automatic Karma of the atoning good acts to which his repentance prompts him.

The state of inner tranquillity in the thick of experience and activity, to which we have referred, reaches its perfection in those mystics who have attained to what some of them have described as the "spiritual marriage"—the condition in which, as after-effect of the mystical ecstasy, the individual has shed all dear concern for his little personality, and lives then selflessly as devoted agent for the good of mankind. Moments of such union of inner peace and dedicated activity are achieved only sporadically and in some degree by most religous persons—coming to the believer when, after prayer or conscientious performance of his religious and his human duties, he feels that, for the time at least, he stands in right relation to the unseen power on which he conceives the fate of his values ultimately to depend.

The serenity of the deeply religious man is due in part also to the fact that his faith provides him with a scale of values, or at least with a conception of the values he is to regard as supreme. Allegiance to these integrates his personality by settling, in a manner he accepts as authoritative, inner conflicts which would on the contrary be apt to persist and to be disruptive so long as each impulse equally was accepted by him as autonomous.

In this way, a living religious faith can operate as a psychotherapeutic force—one which, through the ages, has often done with considerable effectiveness what, in our days of widespread religious skepticism, psychoanalysts and other psychiatrists are attempting to do in a different manner. Their procedures, at some time in the future, may genuinely achieve the status of a science and then have all the potency that goes with scientific knowledge. One wonders, however, whether the psychotherapeutic means of psychiatry will not then have become much the same as those of religion, the difference being chiefly that certain of the articles of faith, on the basis of which religion has operated therapeutically, will then have gained instead the status of items of scientific knowledge. Recent discoveries in the field of psychosomatic medicine suggest that therapeutic effects on the body, as well as on the psyche, tend to result from the serene confidence which it is the distinctive personal function of religion to induce.

The account given in this chapter, of the essential nature of religion conceived in terms of the social and the personal functions which it is its distinctive business to perform, will doubtless appear to critical readers unduly rosy, as ignoring the vast amount of evil for which the various religions of the world have been responsible as a matter of historical fact. That the writer does not ignore or minimize it will become evident in the later chapter on "The Debit Side of Religion." But that religion, in the hands of its all too human priests and devotees, has indeed much to its debit as well as to its credit, does no more invalidate our analysis of its essence than do the deaths and sufferings caused by the shortcomings or blunders of medical practitioners through the ages invalidate the fact that medicine is essentially the art of curing, alleviating, or preventing disease and its pains; that it does to some extent succeed in performing that task; and that it is the only human institution specifically dedicated to it.

## Chapter 9

# RELIGION, FAITH, AND TRUTH

One point needs to be emphasized in connection with the account of the nature of religion given in the last chapter. It is that, in order to be capable of performing the social or the personal functions distinctive of religious beliefs, beliefs having contents suitable for those functions need not be objectively true nor even clear; they need only to be fervently held. If so held, they will work, no matter how vague, crude, or even absurd they may be; or, of course, no matter how true objectively they may happen to be.

### Religion Essentially a Matter of Faith

Religion, in other words, rests essentially on faith, not on knowledge. What is called religious knowledge is knowledge only of the fact that faith sometimes can "move mountains"; and religious faith is belief in the power of belief to do so.

That, in order to be effective, religious beliefs need not be true objectively, but true only in this pragmatic sense, is evident from the fact that, since the beliefs of the various religions are not simply different, but in many cases are contrary, they cannot possibly be all true; and yet that, in manners corresponding to the various levels of civilization of the believers, the diverse beliefs all manage to perform about equally well—which is often none too well—the functions we have described.

So long as one considers only the "queer" beliefs of religions other than one's own, one finds it easy enough to admit that religious beliefs can work without being objectively true.

But it takes more capacity than is commonly possessed to realize that one's own cherished religious beliefs too might well be nothing more than efficacious illusions. Rather, one spontaneously classes them under such question-begging rubrics as "intuitions" or "revelations," which seem on the one hand to reconcile one's lack of evidence for the beliefs with one's conviction of their truth, and on the other to account for the great value one finds them to have.

## Belief Effective Even When Vague

It is evident also that the other intellectual values, to wit, clarity, consistency, and explanatory power, are no more essential than is truth to the working effectiveness of religious beliefs. Provided that inconsistencies—either internal or with facts known—are not absolutely glaring, they are psychologically sterilized in part by the usual vagueness of the beliefs, and in part by the common practice of keeping each belief in a separate mental pocket, which insulates it from patent clash with the others. And religious beliefs for the most part have explanatory power only in the spurious manner which consists in giving an awesome name to the explanation one wishes one had, and then mistaking the name for an explanation. Evidently, to answer the question as to *how* something comes to be, by saying that God does it, is to answer a different question instead; namely, *who* does it; and the answer to *this* question, whether right or wrong, leaves wholly unanswered the question originally asked, which was not "Who?" but "How?" When this is pointed out, pious persons are wont to reply that the powers of God are great and mysterious, and that we cannot pretend to understand his *modi operandi*. But then, why not have answered the question that had been asked by saying simply and at once that *we do not know*, since this is what it ultimately comes to? Obviously, a supposition, such as that "God does it," which would "explain" automatically anything and everything, really explains nothing in particular. Moreover, why assume tacitly that that of which one is ignorant must be of a "divine" nature, rather than perhaps of a "devilish" or of an impersonal and neutral nature?

With regard to the matter of clarity in religious beliefs, Pratt points out that the ideas of "God," harbored by the great majority of persons who "believe in God," developed naturally in childhood out of the child's relationship to his father and mother, supplemented by the casual, nontechnical references to God which the child heard made in the family circle. The more or less careful and precise conceptions of God formulated by theologians have hardly any part in the ordinary man's working idea of God. As a sample of the latter, Pratt mentions that, at a prayer meeting in a small village not far from where he lived, "the pastor asked those present to describe their idea of God. One good and very candid deacon, when it came his turn, responded that his idea of God was 'a kind of an oblong blur.'" Pratt adds that that answer "probably represented fairly well the state of mind of most of his less candid neighbors."[1]

## The Functions of Religious Beliefs Practical Rather Than Theoretical

Leuba, in commenting on the supposition of Herbert Spencer in his *First Principles,* that religion is rooted in man's striving after an explanation of the world's puzzle, asks: "How could men have come to think that 'the vital element in all religions is . . . the conviction that the existence of the world, with all it contains and all which surrounds it, is a mystery ever pressing for interpretation'?" And Leuba continues: "On the contrary, the mystery of the world is resolutely thrust aside by consciousness insofar as it is, and as long as it remains, religious. Religious consciousness as such *refuses* to deal with intellectual problems; if they are forced upon it, it refuses to see them; it will not, if it can, make religious life wait upon rational solutions, but instead it adopts 'working hypotheses' and leaves philosophy to unravel the endless puzzles . . . the religious attitude postulates, the other [the philosophic] inquires . . . the religious consciousness wants *to be*, the philosophic consciousness wants *to know*." [2]

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[1] J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), p. 200.

Leuba believes that intellectualistic views of the root of religion, such as Spencer's, Guyau's, and others, have had the mischievous consequence of forcing the question of the existence of God on the attention of the students of religion as if it were the paramount or even the only problem: "An ontological problem has become in most minds synonymous with the religious problem." Thus, "men have come to deceive themselves into the belief that they really care for the existence of a Personal First Cause or of a Moral Order in itself, while that with which they are concerned is solely their relation, and that of the world in which they live, to these possible existences. We are absolutely indifferent to the fate of the First Cause in as long as our own fate and that of the world surrounding and affecting us is not at stake . . . The ultimate queries we want answered when we consider the question of the existence of God, or of a Moral Order is one or several of the following: Shall I get the meat and drink I want for which I am willing to pray? Shall the dear one be healed by a divine hand? Shall I get the moral support, the sense of fellowship after which my weak flesh yearns? Shall the right ultimately triumph? . . ." When this is recognized, the foremost questions asked will then be: "What does man expect from the existences in which he would like to believe? Are the needs of humanity to be satisfied only by existence of, or through the belief in, a particular Being or Order, or can they be satisfied otherwise?" [3]

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[2] J. H. Leuba, "The Contents of the Religious Consciousness," *The Monist*, XI (January, 1901), 572–73.

This last question is pertinent indeed in these days of unparallelled material accomplishments, when the need for religion is being widely felt again, and is being exploited by purveyors who would arrogate to themselves a monopoly in restraint of salvation.

## The Ordinary Man's Working Concept of God

The facts, as to the ordinary man's working concept of God, would seem to be (*a*) that from infancy he has heard the word "God" uttered in the context of attitudes of reverence and obedience; of feelings of humility, hope, or gratitude; of injunctions against vices and of demands for virtue; of performance of certain ritual acts; and so on; (*b*) that, as a result of such frequent association with the word "God," these attitudes, feelings, rules of conduct, and observances have become, as psychologists would say, "conditioned" to the sound or sight of that word—that is, automatically aroused, recalled, or prompted to, by it; and (*c*) that the plain man's idea of God is little more than that of an X, which, or who, somehow sanctions those attitudes, feelings, and acts.

For religious purposes, which as Leuba insists are essentially practical, the plain man's conception of God need not be and seldom is any more definite than that. The answers he gives when asked how he conceives God have hardly any other function in his life than that of serving as ready answers when he is asked that question. And, when *he* asks another plain man whether he believes in God, what he tacitly but really wants to know is whether the other man is likely to pick his pocket or to seduce his daughter if occasion offers. But precisely because the worthy attitudes, feelings and impulses we have mentioned are in so many persons conditioned to the word "God," the iconoclasm which moves some of the *nouveaux riches* of free thought to jeer or to sneer at that word is not only inconsiderate of the feelings of believers, but also subversive of certain socially and personally valuable impulses and attitudes in the believers. That such impulses and attitudes are so widely conditioned to the word "God" is a perfectly good scientific reason for not taking it in vain. Such atheists as happen to be able to live nobly and serenely without belief in a God should realize that a great many people cannot do so, and find it difficult enough even with the aid of such a belief.

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[3] J. H. Leuba, "Introduction to a Psychological Study of Religion," *The Monist*, XI (January, 1901), 208–10.

### Effect of Philosophical Detachment on One's Religious Beliefs

Does possession of enough philosophical detachment to realize that even one's own religious beliefs may not be objectively true, automatically destroy or impair their subjective efficacy? Pratt considers this question specifically in connection with the belief that a God exists, who hears and can be moved by prayer; and Pratt answers it on the whole affirmatively, quoting with approval, in reference to experience of the benefits of prayer, L. P. Jacks's statement that "to interpret experience is to change it." Pratt declares that "the subjective effects of prayer are almost invariably due, directly or indirectly, to some real faith" that an objective relation exists "between the prayerful soul and some sort of 'Higher Power' . . . The subjective effects of prayer, in fact, seem to be roughly proportional to the strength of the faith of him who prays." And he concludes that "since the subjective value of prayer is chiefly due to the belief that prayer has values which are *not* subjective, it will with most persons evaporate altogether once they learn that it is *all* subjective. Hence, if it be true both that the subjective value of prayer is very great and also that it is the only value which prayer possesses, this latter fact should be assiduously kept secret." He puts the point by comparing the case with that of a physician who were to prescribe bread pills to his patient and at the same time were to tell him: "They contain nothing but bread and have no value in themselves, absolutely none; but since you don't know this fact and are unaware that you are being fooled, their subjective effect upon you will be invaluable." [4]

Pratt, it is true, somewhat qualifies these conclusions here and there; saying, for instance, that "the number of persons who would be able to get any beneficent results from prayer once they had lost their faith in its objective nature, is exceedingly limited"; or again, excepting from those conclusions "a few Jaina and Buddhist monks, and a few earnest 'emancipated' minds." As exemplifying the existence of such minds, and suggesting that perhaps they may not be quite so few after all, may be mentioned the fact, which Pratt himself reports and to which he may not attach enough weight, that among the Jainas, who believe in no God, may be found some "very intelligent and educated men," who are firmly convinced that the Tirthankaras (the former great spiritual teachers of mankind) can never be reached or in any way affected by human prayers or offerings, but who nevertheless go on making offerings and intoning Sanskrit verses before a Tirthankara image. Pratt goes on to say that, when he talked with these men, they "insisted that they keep up the cult in this strict and scrupulous fashion because they find that its subjective effects upon them are decidedly beneficial"; and, he adds, "this, in fact, is the orthodox Jaina theory upon the subject." [5]

## Tenacity of Beliefs That Have Become Habitual

It seems to the author—from observation of his own case, from some others of the cases Pratt himself cites, and from considerations to be set forth presently—that Pratt rather overestimates the probable effects of realization by a person that he has no proof, nor even any particular evidence, that his religious beliefs are true. Rather, if the person in view also has no proof or particular evidence of their being false, he may well continue to hold them as fervently as ever. In matters of belief, and equally of disbelief, men are creatures less of reason than of habit, no matter how acquired; and this is true even of scientists and even of philosophers, however humiliating a footnote this fact may write to their fond picture of themselves as thoroughly rational beings. A certain eminent scientist, friend of Sir Wm. Crookes, confessed this after reflecting on the difficulty he was having in believing some of the extraordinary facts that Crookes had reported witnessing in the course of his investigation of the phenomena called spiritualistic. This friend, whom Crookes does not name, but who he states holds a high position in the scientific world, wrote him as follows:

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[4] Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness, op. cit.*, pp. 335–36.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

> An *intellectual* reply to your facts I cannot see. Yet it is a curious fact that even I, with all my tendency and desire to believe spiritualistically, and with all my faith in your power of observing and your thorough truthfulness, feel as if I wanted to see for myself; and it is quite painful to me to think how much more proof I want. Painful, I say, because I see that it is not reason which convinces a man, unless a fact is repeated so frequently that the impression becomes like a habit of mind, an old acquaintance, a thing known so long that it cannot be doubted. This is a curious phase of man's mind, and it is remarkably strong in scientific men—stronger than in others, I think. For this reason we must not always call a man dishonest because he does not yield to evidence for a long time. The old wall of belief must be broken by much battering.[6]

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[6] Quoted by Sir Wm. Crookes in a footnote to an article entitled "Notes of an Enquiry into the Phenomena Called Spiritual During the Years 1870–73," first published in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, January, 1874, and reprinted in Crookes' *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (Manchester and London: Two Worlds Publishing Co., 1926), p. 89.

The reactions of various types of persons to the reports made by investigators in the field of psychical research constitute very instructive material for the study of the psychology of belief and disbelief, irrespective of whether the content of a belief or disbelief be more specifically religious, scientific, or other. Richet, in an address on this general topic entitled "Des Conditions de la Certitude,"[7] comes to a conclusion similar to that of Crookes' friend when he declares that "one has absolute belief only of habitual facts," and that "to believe completely a phenomenon, one must be used to it." The tenacity both of habitual belief and disbelief, even in the teeth of evidence and logic, has been edifyingly illustrated by other writers through citation of many classical and other concrete instances.[8]

## Alternative Explanations of the Efficacy of a Religious Act

Because of that very tenacity, a discriminating person who happened to have a firm belief, backed up by personal experience, in, for example, the efficacy of prayer, might very well not lose that belief on becoming persuaded, perhaps, that no God exists, or—like the correspondent whom Pratt quotes at length on the benefits of prayer—that if there is a God, he does not hear or heed prayers.

On coming to such conclusions, an intelligent person might well say to himself that, anyway, prayer works, and therefore that the *practice* of it is essentially sound, even if the true explanation of its efficacy is different from what he had until then assumed. He might henceforth call his spiritual exercises "meditation," "self-examination" or "self-confession," "aspiration after high ideals," "fervent formulations of worthy desires," and so on, instead of as hitherto calling them "prayers." But he might be discerning enough to perceive at work equally under both sets of names the same dependable but abstract psychological principles.

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[7] Charles Richet, *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research,* XXXV (1926), 442, 444.

[8] See, for instance, the two chapters on "Credulity" and "Incredulity" among men of science and of learning in Camille Flammarion's book *The Unknown* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1900); and Walter F. Prince's book *The Enchanted Boundary* (Boston: The Boston Soc. for Psychic Research, 1930).

Further, in the case of prayers for external effects, that had, let us suppose, been definitely proved efficacious—for instance, prayer for the healing of another person—he might conclude that the very fervor and altruistic nature of the wish together with utterance of it, constituted a *natural* force which, in some mysterious manner and subject to conditions not yet understood, operates *directly* on the sufferer, instead of, as he had thought before, only indirectly through the intermediary of some supernatural being who then directly, in some manner no less mysterious, operates on the sufferer. The faith, which indeed is necessary, even if not always sufficient, for results in such cases, can be just as strong when the "higher power" invoked is that of empirically discovered and tested psychological or other natural laws, as when it is the power of a merely postulated supernatural being. Most men's faith, for instance, that if they slip off the roof they will fall, is much stronger than their faith in God's power then to hold them up in mid-air if he will.

But further still, the discerning person we are considering might well have come to the view that magic, whether "white" or "black," is real, and is really the art of putting to work—by symbolically enacting in dramatic form the causing of a desired effect—some latent powers possessed by the subconscious part of the human mind; powers which cannot be set to work by direct volition, but the reality of which has been demonstrated by the psychosomatic and the psychological effects producible under hypnosis. A person who had come to such a conception of the nature of magic could then well view prayer as a magical operation, the dramatic, petitive form of which is only symbolic, yet is the very form most effective for putting to work the capacities of his subconscious. He might fully recognize that faith in the efficacy of the prayer or other magical act is necessary to its efficacy, but he might at the same time recognize the act of praying as being the most efficacious form of symbolic enactment of the wish it formulates; so that prayer is then the "act of faith"—the act which confers the required intensity on belief in the efficacy of belief.

## Acquisition of Belief or Disbelief Without Evidence

The preceding remarks concerned the case of a person in whom a certain religious act, such as prayer, had long been habitual and had been found by him efficacious subjectively, and possibly also found, or at least judged, physically efficacious—this person, however, having come to question or reject the hypothesis on which he had in the past tacitly based that act; for instance, in the case of prayer, the hypothesis that a supernatural being exists who hears and answers it. Such a person, we pointed out, might even then continue to pray, but do so because he found that performance of the act served to vivify the *faith* in the act's efficacy, on which, as a matter of empirical fact, its *actual* efficacy depends even on a nontheistic hypothesis as to the *modus operandi* of the act.

We may, however, now consider the case of a person in whom, on the contrary, the religious act concerned—say prayer again—has *not* been habitual, who has *not* had faith in its efficacy, and who has *not* accepted the theistic hypothesis on which the practice of that act is ordinarily based. This person might nonetheless have observed that prayer seems to be of much value to those who engage in it with faith in its efficacy; and he might in consequence have come to wish that he could himself acquire this faith. What we must now ask is whether deliberate practice of the act by him, without, as in the man first considered, a past history of faith in its efficacy, will be sufficient to *generate*—not, as in the other case, simply to *vivify*—such faith; and if so, then whether it will perhaps also be sufficient to make him accept the hypothesis on which prayer is in general tacitly predicated.

No hard and fast answer can be given to these two questions. The general principle holds, that as a man acts again and again, so does he tend to come to feel and to believe. This is the principle on which was consciously based Pascal's advice to those he wished to convert to Catholic Christianity. He depicts such a prospective convert as having concluded that he would be far better off if he were to believe the premises of that religion, and yet as finding himself unable to believe them. To that person's question as to what then can he do, Pascal answers that others have been in the same predicament and have found an effective way out of it: "Follow the method with which they began; it was by acting just as if they did believe—by taking holy water, by having masses said, etc. Naturally this same procedure will make you believe and will stupefy you," i.e., (interpreting Pascal's word as he probably meant it,) will make the skepticism of your reason appear to you stupid.[9]

Similarly, praying, and especially making prayer a habit, will tend to generate faith in the efficacy of prayer. But the tendency may be counteracted by one or another of various factors. For instance, by some particular prayer which turns out patently fruitless. Pratt mentions the case of an eight-year-old girl who, having been taught that prayer could move mountains, prayed for three hours one evening that Mt. Washington should be removed from the White Mountains into the sea. "The disappointing result shook her faith to such an extent that she did not pray again all summer." [10]

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[9] "Suivez la manière par ou ils ont commencé; c'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes, etc. Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira." *Pensées*, ed. Charles Louandre (Paris: Charpentier, 1854), p. 232.

Again, the tendency to disbelief in such matters, which goes with the intellectual habits of, for example, a worker in the natural sciences, is likely to be stronger than the tendency to belief which the deliberate practice of prayer would generate in him. Indeed, in so far as such a person brings home with him the intellectual climate of the laboratory instead of parking it at the door, it will, if he attempts to pray, probably cause him to feel so much like a fool as to make it psychologically impossible for him to do it at all.

On the other hand, even such a man, if, outside his professional work, he associates with persons who take theism for granted, who practice family prayers, and who discuss religious matters with the attitude of believers; or if he reads many reports of the effects of prayer—such as quoted or referred to in Pratt's chapter on the subject and in other discriminating but sympathetic works on the psychology of religion—then, in this type of intellectual climate, the idea that prayer may be efficacious will for that man easily lose the status of what William James calls a dead option, and acquire enough plausibility to make deliberate trial of prayer psychologically feasible for him. Whether the practice will eventually generate in him the faith in its efficacy which he sought will depend not only on how persistently he adheres to it, but also on how productive of at least subjective benefits it turns out to be for him.

## Is Belief or Disbelief Without Evidence Ever Legitimate?

The fact seems to be, then, that a person, by deliberately placing himself in a favorable psychological environment, and by deliberately and perseveringly acting as he would if he had certain beliefs or disbeliefs which in fact he does not have but wishes he did have, can sometimes succeed in acquiring them. The question we must now ask, however, as did W. K. Clifford in his essay on *The Ethics of Belief*, is whether it is not intellectually immoral to do this. Is not belief or disbelief of anything without evidence of its truth or falsity, always a shameful betrayal of the obligations imposed on man by his possession of the capacity to observe, to discriminate, and to reason?

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[10] Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

It seems to the present writer that this question has been definitively answered by William James in his famous essay on *The Will to Believe.* But in it, the logical essentials of his answer are overlaid by an abundance of interesting and often wise but more or less incidental remarks; and the literary style, as in general with James, is easy and flexible rather than marked by precision. These features of the essay have tended to veil rather than to make evident the exact nature and the force of James' contention, which on this account has, by both opponents and adherents, often been taken as being that it is perfectly legitimate to believe anything one pleases and can manage to believe, if only the belief concerned be such as to make one happier. This is far from being what James really contends, for that statement wholly ignores the carefully specified manifold condition strictly subject to which believing what one wills to and can believe is asserted by James to be legitimate in the absence of evidence.

In the present section, the writer will attempt to state as clearly and definitely as possible his conception—which he believes is essentially that set forth by James—of the nature of that manifold condition. The interested reader may then look up, for instance, Bertrand Russell's account of James' contention, and decide whether what Russell refutes is anything more than a misconception of what James really contends.[11] For the sake of brevity, what is about to be said will be worded in terms only of belief, but, *mutatis mutandis,* will apply equally to disbelief.

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[11] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1945), pp. 814–16.

The contention, then, is that whenever we are:

*a*) confronted by an option, i.e., a choice, between two mutually incompatible hypotheses,
*b*) and this option is a "genuine" option,
*c*) and we do not have evidence sufficient to prove that one is true or is more probably true than the other,

then we not only legitimately may but cannot otherwise than accept the particular one of the two hypotheses which is most congenial to our natural inclination, temperament, or emotional preference.

The crucial term, on which the soundness of this thesis rests, is the adjective "genuine." James employs it in a technical sense, which he carefully specifies. The adjective, however, appears to have been nonetheless frequently taken by readers of James only in its common laudatory but rather vague sense, with the result that the whole force of the argument was missed. We must therefore make perfectly clear, and stress, the special sense attached to the term "genuine option" in the contention stated above.

A "genuine" option, then, is one which satisfies three conditions together, namely, that it be *living* (vs. dead), *momentous* (vs. trivial), and *forced* (vs. avoidable). The meaning of each of these terms must now in turn be specified and illustrated.

By a "living" option is meant one in which *both* of the hypotheses offered to our choice are "live" ones in the sense that both make some appeal, however small, to us; i.e., both tempt in some degree our acceptance. "Dead," on the contrary, is any option in which one or both of the hypotheses have in our eyes no plausibility whatever—no chance at all of being true. For all readers of this book, probably, the hypothesis—accepted by some savages—that it is possible by magical practices to kidnap the shadow cast by a person in the sun, is a completely dead hypothesis, and the option of either accepting or rejecting it is accordingly a dead option. For many of the same readers, on the other hand, the hypothesis, for instance, that there exists a God such as described in the Bible, is probably a live hypothesis, whether they be in fact more inclined to believe it or to disbelieve it.

By a "momentous" option is meant one where it is important to make the right choice because what is at stake for us in it is important, and because the opportunity to choose we have at the moment is, or may well be, the only one or the last one we shall ever have. A "trivial" option, on the other hand, is one where the stake is of such negligible importance to us that we hardly care whether we win or lose; or one where other chances to choose will offer if we do not avail ourselves of the one before us; or one where the choice we make is reversible if later found to have been unwise. Examples would be a choice by a rich man in a case where the stake is only a penny; or again, the choice whether or not to buy now an article of which we can obtain the like as easily at another time; or purchase of something at a department store that allows return of it if one decides he does not wish to keep it. An example of momentous choice, on the other hand, would be one as to whether or not to marry a certain person; or as to whether to undergo a dangerous operation which if successful would cure some serious disability.

Lastly, a "forced" option is one where refusal to choose amounts to having chosen, because the consequences of refusal are the same as would have resulted from choice of a particular one of the alternatives. An "avoidable" option, on the other hand, is one where alternatives other than those offered to us exist. If, for example, one is asked to choose between Christianity and atheism, one may choose neither but embrace instead Mohammedanism, or polytheism, or agnosticism, etc. As an illustration of an option which, on the contrary, is "forced," one may take the case of a person who is driving down a steep hill, when the brakes of the car fail and, when he tries to shift into low gear, the gears strip. He is then faced with the option of either jumping out, or staying in the car. This option is "forced" because refusal by him to choose amounts to the same thing as would having chosen to stay in.

This option, indeed, is not only forced, but evidently is also both living and momentous. It is therefore an example of a "genuine" option in the sense specified by James. Moreover, the person in the car probably has at the time no evidence sufficient to show that one of the two courses open to him is safer than the other. Patently, then, the course he adopts in such circumstances not only may legitimately be, but cannot otherwise than be, determined by his temperament: it will be a matter of whether he is the type of person who when in doubt and in fear naturally inclines to do something actively, or on the contrary is the type who then inclines to passivity. Descartes's assertion that, in cases where one does not see clearly and distinctly whether a proposition is true, one nevertheless can avoid error by suspending judgment, is sound enough in matters of pure science; but it altogether ignores the fact that in practical matters some options are forced, that is, that in some cases to suspend judgment is equivalent to having judged in favor of one of the alternatives.

The example just considered—of an option that is "genuine" in the sense specified by James, i.e., is at once living, momentous, and forced, and that, moreover, cannot be decided on the basis of knowledge because the knowledge which would be relevant is not possessed at the time decision has to be made—this example makes fully evident the truth of the contention that in the case contemplated, and in any parallel case, what James calls "our passional nature," i.e., our temperament, inclination, or emotional preference, "not only lawfully may, but must, decide" which one of the alternatives to embrace.[12]

No doubt as to the truth of this seems possible unless one ignores one or more of the conditions represented by the words "living," "momentous," and "forced," or unless one ignores the additional condition that, at the time decision has to be made, the knowledge be lacking which would enable the person concerned to make the decision rationally instead of "passionally."

Now the fact is that questions such as whether the God of Christianity exists, whether man has an immortal soul, whether acceptance of Christ is necessary to salvation, and questions as to the truth or falsity of many others of the beliefs of Christianity or of other religions, constitute options which for many persons are genuine in the very sense specified, and which cannot be decided by them rationally for lack of the knowledge which would be necessary for this. *For such persons,* then, and *in the absence of possession by them of such knowledge, wishful decision* as to whether to believe or not believe any particular such religious doctrine *is not merely legitimate but unavoidable.*

In the preceding section, we have pointed out that although such wish to believe does not automatically cause belief, nevertheless it can sometimes be effective if one goes in a psychologically intelligent manner about the task of acquiring the belief one wishes to acquire, or of getting rid of the belief one desires to relinquish.

Summing up, then, in terms of the functions of religious beliefs, our view as to the whole question of the "right" of an intelligent man to accept if he wishes and if he can any such belief when evidence as to its truth or falsity is lacking or is insufficient to establish a probability, we submit the following assertions:

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[12] William James, *The Will to Believe,* etc. (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1908), p. 11. Copyright, 1896, by William James.

No matter how intelligent, educated, vigorous, powerful, and resourceful a man may be, there is always some limit to what he can do to safeguard his values. Hurricanes, earthquakes, floods or fire; disease, accidents, wars, or revolutions; the stupidity, faithlessness, ignorance, or wickedness of others if not of himself; and so on; threaten at times, or bring disaster to, either himself or the things or persons he holds most dear, in spite of his best efforts to safeguard them.

When a man (1) faces a situation where there is such a threat; (2) and has already done everything in his power; (3) and yet the values threatened have not thereby been safeguarded; (4) and a hypothesis as to supernatural or extranatural matters presents itself, of the truth or falsity or probability of which he has no sufficient evidence; (5) and it is a hypothesis which, if true, would offer a way, more or less probably effective, of safeguarding those values, or if not, of anesthetizing himself more or less to their loss, *then* two possible courses are open to that man:

*a*) One is to seek, by acceptance of that hypothesis, the preservation of the threatened values; or the trust or perspective he needs to enable him to bear with some serenity the loss of those values or the prospect of it.

*b*) The other course is to refuse to accept that hypothesis, and thus remain anxious, worried, fearful, despairing and discouraged.

But evidently, the first of these two courses is the more sensible one to take, since *ex hypothesi* it has great positive value at least of a subjective sort even if the belief accepted happens to be false; whereas the second course has negative subjective value, i.e., is painful, whether the belief rejected be true or false.

The happy subjective state, which results from accepting in spite of the absence of evidence certain beliefs which may be false, may indeed be called a fool's paradise. But an unhappy subjective state, in which we allow ourselves to remain by rejecting in spite of absence of evidence a possibly true belief, may with equal justice be called a fool's hell. And if, because of one's lack of evidence as to the truth or falsity of a live and momentous hypothesis, a fool's paradise or a fool's hell are the possibilities between which one is forced to choose, I submit that the fool's paradise is anyway better than the fool's hell.

## Chapter 10

## THE DEBIT SIDE OF RELIGION

A religion was defined earlier as any set of items of faith—together with the observances, attitudes, feelings, and conduct bound up with them—which, in so far as dominant in the individual, tend to perform for him personally, and for society through him, certain beneficial functions thereafter described. It was acknowledged, however, that in fact the various religions of the world often fail to produce those benefits, and instead are in many cases responsible for much evil. But it was pointed out that these failures of religion in the hands of its believers do not invalidate the conception of its nature set forth in that definition, any more than do the many failures of medicine invalidate the conception of medicine as the science and art of preventing, curing, or alleviating disease.

The objectivity of view of religion at which this book aims requires that we should now consider the chief evils which the critics of religion have pointed out in its history, and that we should trace them to their sources. The debit side of religion can then be compared with its credit side as represented by the social and personal services which it is its particular business to render and which in many cases it does as certainly render as it fails to do so in various others.

But further, just as the knowledge of physiology, of drugs, and of conditions that affect health and vigor, which the physician attempts to use for beneficial purposes, can also be used destructively in warfare, or by the poisoner, or by the torturer of opponents of the regime in police states, and may then be described as inversions of medicine, so may we speak of inversions of religion when the psychological principles and the magic of ritual, which it is the task of religion to apply to beneficent purposes, are applied instead to malicious ones and to procurement of sadistic or selfish satisfactions to those who so apply them. Hence some account of such inversions, which can be grouped under the elastic headings of Satanism and Witchcraft, is also called for, and will be given in the next chapter.

## Two Roots of the Evils Connected with Religion

The evils which as a matter of historical fact have arisen in connection with religion and are even today widely associated with it are traceable in the main to two sources: one, the ignorance or the stupidity of men; and the other, their passions.

The priests and the lay adherents of the many religions are but men, and are possessed in various degrees of the common human frailties. The priests are doubtless mostly sincere and devoted to their calling; and the rules of life to which, as professional good men, they are obliged to conform, insulate them to some extent from certain of the temptations to which laymen are exposed. On the other hand, they are subjected, and at times succumb, to the special temptations which go with positions of authority over other men—temptations to pride of office, to love of power, to arbitrariness, arrogance, and self-seeking. Virtue is easier to preach than to practice, and vice is detected more easily in others than in one's self.

For the lay adherents, on the other hand, counsels of virtue are easier to listen to humbly than to follow, and vices are easier to confess and do penance for than to give up. Even into the most sincere attempts of the layman to understand and apply the religious teachings he receives, the common human passions easily inject themselves, as well as the ignorance or stupidity common to men in matters foreign to their everyday experience or special occupation; and this often distorts the teachings and subverts the social and personal functions which it is their task to perform.

But the teachings themselves, which are given out in the name of religion, are in many cases demonstrably erroneous or foolish. The common failure to detect this—at least in one's own religion—is traceable to the fact emphasized in the last chapter, that religious beliefs are matters not of evidence but essentially of pious acceptance; and that men often give such acceptance not only to beliefs which, although unevidenced, tend to function anyway beneficially, but also to beliefs labeled religious which, had they not been sneaked in and firmly implanted by early suggestion, would be critically examined and easily recognized as pernicious, and as false or at least gratuitous.

The less evidence we have in support of our beliefs, the more emotionally we cling to them, and the more intolerant we then are of contrary ones and indeed of the open-minded objectivity with which the scientific spirit approaches questions as to the truth or the value of any given belief. "Objectivism," which in matters political is nowadays reckoned by communists as a doctrinal sin, has under other names long in fact been so reckoned by religious bigots in matters of their own religion. What has been called the warfare between religion and science has actually not been essentially about specific beliefs. At the root, it has rather been a conflict between, on the one hand, the insistence of the scientific spirit upon man's right and indeed duty to examine impartially the credentials of every belief and, on the other, religion's instinctive opposition to freedom of inquiry where religious beliefs are concerned—an opposition which is a psychological corollary of the fact that these do not have the firm status of knowledge but only the precarious status of faith. As Morris Cohen points out, "the historic opposition [of religion] to science has not been a vagary of wicked theologians but has arisen out of the very spirit which has animated most, if not all, of the religions which have appeared in history . . . We inherit our traditional ritual with its implicit faith and emotional content almost with our mother's milk, and we naturally cling to it as passionately as we do to all things which have thus become part of our being, our family, our country, our language." Hence, "When religious opinion becomes formulated, it naturally expresses itself in absolute claims," and religion therefore "never preaches the duty of critical thought, of searching or investigating proposed facts." [1]

## Evils of Religious Obscurantism

One of the chief evils to be laid at the door of religion in history is that the claims to absolute truth and authority, to which Cohen refers, have often greatly obstructed the search of science for verifiable truths, and sometimes also the application of the knowledge science had won, or even of ordinary common sense, to the relief of human suffering. Such obstruction, moreover, has been not only through psychological pressure but also in many cases through force when the agents of religion happened to have it at their command.

Examples of the militant obscurantism inspired in them not only in Christendom but elsewhere by their religious beliefs are innumerable, and many of them are cited in Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (1875) and in books by various other authors; in particular, in White's two-volume *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), which is probably the best known and one of the most elaborately documented works on the subject.

The victories of science have by this time been so complete in many of these conflicts that the vanquished opinions—for instance, that the earth is flat, that it is motionless and is the center of the universe, etc.—which at one time were strictly enjoined supposedly as based on divine revelations, are in the present generation thoroughly dead hypotheses for the vast majority of even half-educated persons. Because of this, it is easy today to underestimate the fierceness of the persecutions religious bigotry has been and still is capable of when possessed of power. For the sake of a realistic perspective on the matter, it will therefore be well to mention here explicitly first a few of the examples of active religious obscurantism discussed by White.

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[1] "The Dark Side of Religion," an essay contributed by Morris Cohen to a symposium, *Religion Today*, ed. A. L. Swift, Jr. (New York: Whittlesey House, 1933), pp. 80, 84. The writer is indebted to this essay for a number of points and for various references in the present chapter. In that essay, at the editor's request, Cohen was presenting only the darker side of religion.

He considers to begin with the violent attacks upon the evolutionary theory of the origin of the world and of the animate and inanimate things in it, which were inspired by the theological belief that the world was created some six thousand years ago out of nothing by God's hands or fiat in six days of twenty-four hours each—a belief based on the language of the Bible, and on the belief that every word of it was dictated or inspired by God himself and is therefore literally and absolutely true. Many of the Christians who today take it for granted that the "days" of Genesis are to be interpreted in the sense of epochs and that the various evolutionary processes are the methods of creating which God chose to employ, do not realize that even so moderately liberal an interpretation —which seems to them the obvious reconciliation of their reverence for the Bible with the facts established by science—represents a triumph of reason over literalism. It hardly occurs to them that such an interpretation would, not so long ago, have been regarded as shockingly heretical and have been bitterly condemned by Protestants and Catholics alike. Indeed, it would still be so regarded by some even today.

On this point, White quotes St. Augustine's famous statement: "Nothing is to be accepted save on the authority of Scripture, since greater is that authority than all the powers of the human mind"; and Luther's declaration: "I hold that the animals took their being at once upon the word of God, as did also the fishes in the sea." White also refers his readers to the passages where Calvin "insists that all species of animals were created in six days, each made up of an evening, and a morning, and that no new species has ever appeared since."[2]

The turning point in the history of the conflict between theological and scientific thought on this subject may be regarded as marked by Alfred Russel Wallace's memoir to the Linnaean Society in 1858 and the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. The reaction of the theologians to the ideas therein set forth is exemplified by the statements of Bishop Wilberforce, that "the principle of natural selection is absolutely incompatible with the word of God," that it "contradicts the revealed relations of creation to its Creator," that it is "inconsistent with the fulness of his glory" and is "a dishonoring view of Nature."[3]

In spite of similar bitter attacks on evolutionary theory, which raged for some time both in England and in other countries, an increasing majority of educated and thinking persons have come to believe that, as Giordano Bruno maintained, the Bible is not a treatise on matters of natural science, and that its value to mankind is found in the elevated moral and spiritual teachings which, among less edifying other things, are contained in the Old and the New Testaments.

Had Darwin lived two hundred years earlier, and fallen into the power of the Inquisition, what his fate would have been at the hands of the custodians of Jesus' message of love can be inferred from that of Giordano Bruno, who as just noted had insisted that the Scriptures were never intended to teach science but morals only, and that they cannot be received as of any authority on astronomical and physical subjects. In 1600 he was burned at the stake in Rome—"the special charge against him being that he had taught the plurality of worlds, a doctrine repugnant to the whole tenor of Scripture and inimical to revealed religion, especially as regards the plan of salvation."[4]

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[2] Andrew D. White, *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1917), Vol. I, pp. 25–26. The references to St. Augustine's, Luther's, and Calvin's writings are given in the footnote on p. 28.

[3] Quoted by White, *op. cit.*, p. 70, Wilberforce's statements are from an article in *The Quarterly Review* for July, 1860.

Copernicus, early in the sixteenth century, had formulated his heliocentric interpretation of the observable astronomical facts, but he prudently delayed until 1543 the publication of his book. In spite of its cautious wording, however, it was condemned by the Inquisition as heretical, and only the fact that Copernicus was then on his deathbed saved him from consequences such as befell Galileo. The telescope the latter constructed revealed to him the existence of satellites revolving in orbits around Jupiter. Also the fact until then unknown that Venus shows phases similar to those of the moon. This fact disposed of the objection which had been made to the Copernican theory, that although if it were correct such phases should exist, yet none could be observed—an objection which until then Galileo had not known how to meet. In 1632, he therefore published his "System of the World." This resulted in his being called by the Inquisition to Rome where, after imprisonment and by threats of torture, he was finally compelled to utter the following recantation: "I, Galileo, being in my seventieth year, being a prisoner and on my knees, and before your Eminences, having before my eyes the Holy Gospel, which I touch with my hands, abjure, curse, and detest the error and the heresy of the movement of the earth."[5] The story that in the same breath he muttered:

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[4] J. W. Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1896), pp. 178–80.

[5] Quoted by White, *op. cit.*, p. 142, who gives a full account of the attacks on Galileo and his views, and of later attempts to repudiate the official condemnation of them (pp. 130–57).

"*eppur si move!*"—"and yet it does move!"—is, although fictitious, doubtless true of what he was thinking as he recited the prescribed recantation.

White, after showing that "The Protestant Church was hardly less energetic against this new astronomy than the mother Church," remarks that, fortunately, "Protestantism had no such power to oppose the development of the Copernican ideas as the older Church had enjoyed."

That religious opposition to the heliocentric theory has not been wholly confined to Christianity is shown by the fact that Aristarchus of Samos (310–230 B.C.), who had put forward the hypothesis "that the fixed stars and the sun remain unmoved, that the earth revolves round the sun on the circumference of a circle, the sun lying at the center of the orbit," [6] —a hypothesis which Seleucus in Babylonia then accepted and developed—was charged with impiety by the Stoic Cleanthes.

## Opposition to Vaccination and Anesthetics

Many are the other items which must be entered on the debit side in the history of Christianity. Among them may be mentioned the violent attacks against inoculation for the prevention of disease, on such grounds as that diseases are sent by Providence for the punishment of sin, that the attempt to prevent them in this manner is "a diabolical operation," a "flying in the face of Providence," that smallpox is "a judgment of God on the sins of the people" and that "to avert it is to provoke him more," that inoculation is "an encroachment on the prerogatives of Jehovah, whose right it is to wound and smite," etc. Vaccination likewise was bitterly opposed as "bidding defiance to Heaven itself, even to the will of God" and on the ground that "the law of God prohibits the practice." [7]

[6] Quoted by Sir Wm. Dampier, *History of Science* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936), p. 48.

[7] Statements quoted by White, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 55–56, 58.

Regarding recourse to cocaine and other anesthetics, White records that the use of coca by the natives of Peru was condemned by the Second Council of Lima in 1567, and that a royal decree followed, declaring that "the notions entertained by the natives regarding it are an illusion of the devil." In 1591, a noblewoman was burned alive in Edinburgh for having sought relief of pain at the birth of her children. The woman to whom she applied for this, Agnes Sampson, was in the same year herself strangled for witchcraft and her body burned.[8] The later use of chloroform for the purpose of easing the pains of childbirth was opposed on the ground that to do so was "to avoid one part of the primeval curse on woman." It is interesting in this connection to note that the most successful of the arguments by which James Simpson fought for the use of anesthetics in surgery was his appeal to the precedent of induced sleep "in the first surgical operation ever performed"—the extraction of Adam's rib by God for the creation of Eve!: "And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof." (Gen. 2:21.)[9]

## Torture of the Insane and of Witches

Another black page is that of the whippings and tortures to which the insane were subjected in consequence of the belief that they were possessed by demons, who would be induced to depart if the body they had invaded was made for them too painful an abode. Still another terrible record is that of the imprisonment, torture, and execution of persons who, on evidence of a wholly imaginary type, were convicted of being witches or sorcerers. The fervor of righteousness with which the sadistic persecution of these unfortunates was carried on was based on such biblical texts as: "Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live" (Exod. 22:18), and: "A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them." (Lev. 20:27.) Dr. Emanuel Miller, author of a work on *Modern Psychotherapy*, remarks in his article on insanity in Chambers' Encyclopedia that "the insecurity, misery and unrest produced by wars and pestilence, 'confessions' extorted by torture, and the effect of such books as the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* combined to make the lot of many insane and hysterical persons horrible in the 15th. and 16th. centuries, though it was not only at them that the procedures for detecting witches and sorcerers came to be directed."

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[8] J. Ashton, *The Devil in Britain and America* (London: Ward & Downey, 1896), p. 289. This book, incidentally, gives on its frontispiece a "facsimile of the only known specimen of the Devil's writing!"

[9] White, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 61–63.

The *Malleus*, published in 1484, was written by two professors of theology, Henry Kramer and James Sprenger, who were appointed by Pope Innocent VIII as Inquisitors into witchcraft and heresy. The book was translated some years ago by the Reverend Montague Summers under the title "The Hammer of Witches which destroyeth Witches and their heresy as with a two edged sword." It argues for the reality of witches, of witchcraft, and of possession by demons. It specifies the kinds of acts that are witchcraft, the methods of questioning witnesses, and various sorts of torture by means of which to get witches and sorcerers to confess. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was used by Inquisitors as handbook.

It is interesting to note that in the introduction to the 1928 edition of his translation, Summers, a man of vast erudition, refers to the *Malleus*, not like Dr. Miller, as infamous, but as "this venerable volume" . . . "this great work—admirable in spite of its trifling blemishes." He regards it as based not in perverse imagination but in facts, and as a useful manual for dealing with them. He believes that all the revolutionary movements in history have been inspired by the Devil and have employed witchcraft. Bromberg, in his *The Mind of Man, The Story of Man's Conquest of Mental Illness,* quotes Summers on this point as follows: "In fact, heresy was one huge revolutionary body exploiting its forces through a hundred different channels and having as its object chaos and destruction . . . The teachings of the Waldenses and the Albigenses, the Henricians, the Poor Men of Lyons, the Cathari, the Vaudois, the Bogomiles and the Manichees . . . were in reality the same dark fraternity just as the Third International, the Anarchists, the Nihilists and the Bolsheviks are in every sense, save the mere label, entirely identical."[10] The whole of Bromberg's Chapter IV, "Witchcraft, the Mass Delusion," should be read. The details it supplies make vividly concrete the terrible situation in which persons thought to be insane, possessed, or obsessed, or to be heretics and practitioners of witchcraft, found themselves. He calls attention to the numerous confessions on the part of witches, admitting having consorted with Satan and going into elaborate details about it. He sees them as "examples of what is known nowadays as memory falsification and pathological lying," and he writes: "It is probable that many individuals convicted and burned as witches were buoyed by an intense masochism or overcome by hysteria. It is difficult otherwise to understand how so many willingly admitted consorting with the devil, with the punishment of death hanging over their heads."[11]

The confessions of the witches, however, bring to mind the extraordinary, seemingly free confessions at trials in communist countries made in our day by persons accused of spying or of plotting against the regime. The light thrown upon the psychology of these confessions by the accounts of the treatment which eventually brought them about, furnished by the few persons who, like Robert Vogeler, recently got away to tell the tale, illuminates also the confessions of the "witches." Besides, it must not be forgotten that most of the persons who, though accused of witchcraft, knew themselves to be guiltless of it, nevertheless believed in its reality and in that of the Devil quite as firmly as did their judges. Hence, when they had been psychologically battered into sufficient suggestibility, the ideas concerning witchcraft with which their minds had long been equipped were readily brought out as statements of facts by means of leading questions.

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[10] Walter Bromberg, *The Mind of Man* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1937), p. 57. Bromberg's quotation is from Summers' Introduction to the 1928 edition (London: John Radker) of his translation of the *Malleus.* Summers' Introduction to the 1948 edition (London: Pushkin Press) is different and slightly more sober. The 1928 Introduction is a truly extraordinary document, of whose tenor the brief quotation in the text gives but a mild idea.

[11] Bromberg, *op. cit.,* p. 60.

Everyone has heard of the trials for witchcraft in New England, but it is safe to say that few persons that have not looked up the details of these or of like affairs elsewhere can have any but a faint idea of the madness which at times gripped whole communities—men, women and children, and learned and ignorant alike—where the matter of witchcraft was concerned.

The Salem witch hunt had its roots in the household of the Reverend Samuel Parris, where his daughter Betty and her cousin Abigail fell under the fascination of the strange tales and practices of Tituba, a half-Carib and half-Negro slave woman from Barbados. Other girls soon joined the circle, most notable among them twelve-year-old Ann Putnam. Eventually Betty first, then Abigail, and then the others began to act strangely, barking and running on all fours like dogs, shrieking contorted in convulsions, and so on. Much excitement naturally resulted in the village, and a physician was called to examine the girls. Unable to find anything physically wrong with them, he declared that "the evil hand is on them." Marion Starkey, whose recent book is a well-documented and highly readable account of the whole affair, remarks that "the girls at this point were having a wonderful time. Their present notoriety was infinitely rewarding to childish natures beset by infantile cravings for attention. Hitherto snubbed and disregarded they were now cosseted and made of."[12]

The girls being unable to name the witches tormenting them, suspects were suggested to them. They eventually acknowledged Tituba first, then Sarah Good and Sarah Osburne, and later spontaneously named many others, as witches that were pinching, biting and otherwise tormenting them. No denials by the accused availed, for the accusers declared that they could see the "Shape" of the witch when it came and afflicted them. Evidently, no possibility existed of disproving this, and it was accepted as fact by the judges. Some of the accused confessed under torture, and it went easier with them than with those—like George Burroughs, the respected and good Rebecca Nurse, and others—who steadfastly refused "to belye themselves" under torture, and whose steadfastness was taken as proof that the Devil was lending them strength. They were hanged on Witches' Hill.

When a man was convicted of witchcraft, his property was automatically forfeited. Giles Cory, bent on preserving it for his heirs, refused to plead either guilty or not guilty when accused, and therefore could not be convicted. To move him to plead, he was subjected to "pressing"—the form of torture prescribed for such cases. Stretched on his back in a field, boards were laid over him and rocks piled on them. But instead of yielding, he said only: "More rocks!" One of those present, who felt doubts as to whether this was really justice, was reassured when informed that, at the time Cory was being pressed to death, poor innocent little Ann Putnam was also undergoing the torture of pressing—by the Shape of a witch none but herself could see, and from whom she was delivered only at the last moment!

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[12] Marion Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1949), p. 30. The book contains an extensive selected bibliography. Older notable and more detailed accounts are Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft* (Boston: Wiggin & Lunt, 1867), and Samuel G. Drake's edition of Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, and of Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, published with notes by Drake under the title *The Witchcraft Delusion in New England* (Roxbury: Woodward's Historical Series, 1866).

Upham records that "children were not only permitted, but induced to become witnesses against their parents, and parents against their children . . . When Martha Carrier was arrested, four of her children were also taken into custody. An indictment against one of them is among the papers. Under the terrors brought to bear upon them they were prevailed on to be confessors." And Upham quotes from the questioning in part as follows:

> It was asked Sarah Carrier by the magistrates,—
>
> How long has thou been a witch?—Ever since I was six years old.
> How old are you now?—Near eight years old . . .
> Who made you a witch?—My mother: she made me set my hand to a book. . . .
> How did you afflict folks?—I pinched them.
> And she said she had no puppets, but she went to them that she afflicted. Being asked whether she went in her body or her spirit, she said in her spirit. She said her mother carried her thither to afflict.
> How did your mother carry you when she was in prison?—She came like a black cat.
> How did you know it was your mother?—The cat told me so, that she was my mother . . .[13]

White mentions that "one poor woman was charged with 'giving a look toward the great meeting house in Salem, and immediately a demon entered the house and tore down a part of it.' This cause for the falling of a piece of poorly nailed wainscoting seemed perfectly satisfactory to Dr. Cotton Mather, as well as to the judge and jury, and she was hanged, protesting her innocence." [14]

Outbreaks of hysteria similar to that of the little girls at Salem, and likewise regarded at the time as due to witchcraft or possession by demons, have not been rare. A variety of them in several countries are mentioned by White, among them the famous case of the Ursuline nuns in the convent at Loudun in France. An epidemic of convulsions, howlings of blasphemies and obscenities, etc., broke out among them, which was ascribed by some of them to their having been bewitched by a priest of the neighborhood, Urbain Grandier. "Even in the agony of torture he refused to confess the crimes that his enemies suggested, [and he was] hanged and burned."[15]

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[13] Upham, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 209–10.
[14] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 150.

The modes of torture employed to prove witches or to induce them to confess were many and ingenious. Some of them are described by Theda Kenyon, who remarks that "the notorious Salem witch-trials are famous out of all proportion to their number or importance; and are chiefly notable for the comparative lack of cruelty with which they were conducted." The number of persons involved was insignificant as compared with that of the victims in Europe under the Inquisition: "In one bishopric, in a space of three months, more than six hundred 'witches' were sent to the stake; in Geneva, five hundred were condemned in the same length of time; in Como, a thousand in less than a year; twenty per cent of the population of Lindheim, Germany; thirty thousand in France, during the reign of Henri III; whereas the Parliament of Toulouse ordered four hundred of these unhappy creatures burned at one time." The same author, commenting on the psychology of those who conducted these persecutions, concludes that "nearly half a million people were tortured to satisfy the devil within their persecutors. Men have always offered altruistic reasons for the satisfaction of their own desires. Inevitably, they wrote down their own glutting cruelty against these defenseless thousands as an act 'for the good of the race,' and particularly of the victims. It was, they murmured sanctimoniously, the only way to save the souls which had been sold to Satan, and safeguard those of the few who had not yet been defiled."[16]

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[15] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 144, 140–57.

The persecution of witches, of course, was not alone by the Inquisition of the Church of Rome. Bromberg, in the chapter of his book already cited, notes that it was "carried along by Protestant churches in Great Britain and Germany. In Protestant Geneva 500 persons were burned in the year 1515 . . . With the advent of the Protestant Reformation, demonology experienced an increase in intensity." He mentions in support the Salem affair and "the severity of the Scottish Kirk of the 17th. century toward witches," and he describes in some detail the case of Geillis Duncane, celebrated in the annals of the Scottish courts, quoting from the book "Daemonologie," by King James I, which "illustrates the technique of sober witch-finding during the Reformation."[17]

## Cruel Practices Demanded by Some Religions

Cohen gives several pages to the mention of cruel practices sanctioned or enjoined by various religions. "In ancient Mexico we have the wholesale sacrifice of prisoners as a form of the national cultus. In the ancient East we have the sacrifice of children to Moloch. Even the Greeks were not entirely free from this religious custom, as the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia by her father testifies." Other instances are the sacrifice of virgins cast in the Well of the Maidens at Chichen Itza in Yucatan, and the religious duty of widows in India to die on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands.

Again, "the doctrine of a loving and all-merciful god professed by Christianity and Islam has not prevented either one from preaching and practicing the duty to hate and persecute those who do not believe."[18] Murderous intolerance of heresy is enjoined in the Bible: Jehovah commands the stoning to death of anyone "in the midst of thee, within any of thy gates . . . [who] hath gone and served other gods and worshipped them, or the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded . . . thou shalt stone them to death with stones." (Deut. 17:2–5.) And farther on, "But the prophet that shall speak a word presumptuously in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." (Deut. 18:20.) In Psalm 137 where Edom is cursed, the joy of cruel revenge for captivity is extolled in the last two verses: "O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed, happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock."

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[16] Theda Kenyon, *Witches Still Live* (New York: Ives Washburn, Inc., 1929), chap. 19, "The Persecution of the Witch," pp. 279, 281, 290.

[17] Bromberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 64.

## Gratuitous Fears; Obsolete Practices and the Relativity of Values

Other evils yet remain to be added to the debit side of religion. One of them is the fear, indeed the terror, inspired in some persons by their belief that they are essentially sinful and guilty, and therefore in dire danger of eternal damnation. This sense of sinfulness is at its worst in the many cases where it is traceable not to awareness of having committed any specific or particularly grievous sin, but to such early teachings as that of the doctrine of original sin, according to which human nature was corrupted at the root by Adam's disobedience of God in the matter of apples; again, that some men are predestined to be damned; that man is a "miserable sinner"; and so on.

Such beliefs, when planted in the fertile soil of childhood's vivid imagination, can curse a person's emotional life from then to the end of his days. This seems to have been the case with Betty, the Reverend Samuel Parris' unfortunate little daughter—with what consequences for others we have seen. The lurid colors in which revivalists and other preachers have loved to paint the awful wrath of God and the terrible torments of the eternal hell he provides for persistent sinners; the vivid pictures of the Devil as lurking in any dark corner to seize the heedless as they pass; the elaborate catalogues and technical definitions of the varieties and degrees of sins of omission and of commission, which make it difficult not to believe one's self guilty of much one had not suspected —all this easily generates in suggestible persons exposed to it a haunting fear of the supernatural in life and a terror of death, rather than courage, sanity and inner peace.

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[18] Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 90, 91, *et. seq.*

Again, a natural consequence of the fact that religious beliefs are matters not of knowledge but of faith is that instructions contained in the sacred books of a religion as to practical matters such as food and drink, sanitation, and the like, which may have been objectively valid relative to the external circumstances existent at one time or place, and to the limits at that time of man's ability to control them, may continue to be obeyed blindly ages after those circumstances have changed or after man has learned to mold them to his will. An example of a religious dietary prohibition which has a sound basis, but which was ignorantly generalized beyond its range of validity, is the biblical injunction against eating pork; for it is unwholesome only when not cooked enough to destroy the *trichinae* it often contains, which now are but were not then known to be responsible for the illness eating it sometimes causes.

Similar remarks would apply to religious regulations concerning, for instance, marriage between relatives. The prohibition of marriage between brother and sister, which has a generally sound biological basis, has at times ignorantly been so extended as to forbid a man's marrying his widowed sister-in-law—a marriage which would in general be wholly free from the biological risks which on the contrary would attach to his marrying a close blood relative. Again, some beliefs which ages ago were incorporated in the scriptures of a religion have no basis other than some purely superficial resemblance. An example would be the Old Testament belief that the rabbit chews the cud as do cows and other ruminants: "And the coney, because he cheweth the cud but parteth not the hoof, he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because she cheweth the cud but parteth not the hoof, she is unclean unto you." (Lev. 11:5, 6.) "The camel and the hare, and the coney, because they chew the cud but part not the hoof, they are unclean unto you." (Deut. 14:7.)

To ascertain what causes what, and under what circumstances, always is a difficult business even when one has a firm grasp of the principles of experimentation and of statistical inquiry. The beliefs a society imbeds in its sacred books, as to what practices are socially or physically beneficial or prejudicial, hardly ever originate out of investigations conducted according to those principles. Rather, they are likely to have arisen out of inferences of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* kind, made in cases where two events which occurred accidentally in close sequence happened to be of striking or important sorts.

Obviously, practices or modes of behavior which might contribute to the social welfare in a primitive society, or in a society possessed only of certain material or technological resources, or in one living under certain special conditions, might have very different effects in a less primitive society, or in one differently equipped or situated. It is in such an anthropological sense that "values" can be said to be relative—indeed, relative not only with respect to different societies or different epochs in a given society, but also to some extent with respect to different individuals in one society. Much of the current confusion on the subject of values, which has arisen out of the investigations of anthropologists and sociologists, would be avoided if it were seen that what is commonly described as relativity of values, should in strictness be described as relativity or variability of the *sources* of value; and that such relativity is perfectly compatible with a categorical, universally applicable conception of the nature of *value itself*, as distinguished from the nature of the various *things*, *practices*, etc., which happen to have value at some places and times but not at some others, or for some persons but not for some others.

It is quite possible to hold, for instance, as do some philosophical hedonists, including the writer, that value—or, more specifically, value positive as distinguished from negative, and intrinsic as distinguished from instrumental—consists in pleasantness; and at the same time to recognize or rather insist on the plain fact that what is a *source* of pleasurable experience for one person can be the opposite for another person or for the same person at another time or in a different context. Obvious examples would be mountain climbing, engaging in scientific research, the doing of altruistic acts, reading poetry, participation in religious ceremonies, listening to classical music, playing bridge, and so on. Moreover, these and other activities differ not only in the degree of intrinsic value they have for different persons—that is, in the immediate enjoyment or the opposite found in them by persons of different tastes, physiques, habits, etc.—but also, of course, in their *instrumental* value; that is, in the intrinsic value of their *consequences* direct or indirect, for the variety of persons who experience those consequences. In connection with the inclination of pragmatists to emphasize considerations of utility, it is important to remember that, ultimately, whatever is useful is so only to the attaining of something useless—but that "useless" means here, not having no value, but having intrinsic value, i.e., having value in and of itself, not merely as means to something other than itself. And further, it is only experiences themselves—states of mind—not the things or situations experienced, which have *intrinsic* value, whether positive or negative.

### Religion as Inhibiting Initiative

We have already mentioned the charge that religious beliefs, by acting as an opiate, have deterred men from exercising the common sense and the powers they actually possessed to ameliorate certain of the conditions under which they were living. For the sake of a just perspective, we pointed out that there are many cases where even man's best efforts fail to help him, and that an opiate is then a blessing not a curse. In such cases, to condemn religious consolation, and to urge scientific research instead, is like denying morphine to a man in pain from advanced cancer on the plea that science will surely discover a cure for this disease sooner or later.

But granting all this, the fact remains that there are many other cases, in which it is quite true that religious beliefs inhibit men from using the knowledge and powers they actually possess to remedy the evils they suffer. So long, for example, as, under the teachings of their religion, men believe that kings rule by divine right, they are inhibited from exerting themselves to overthow a monarchy that happens to be tyrannical. So long as men believe that God intends that woman shall suffer in childbirth, they will, as we have seen, neglect or prevent the use of means which may be available to alleviate or eliminate the pains of parturition. So long as man believes God intends that the poor shall always be with us, he will do nothing to eliminate poverty from the social setup, even if the discoveries of scientists and the enterprise of men of vision have made production so efficient that grinding poverty need no longer be the fate of any man.

These and similar evil effects of certain religious beliefs are facts. Justice, however, requires us to point out that the inhibiting of man from attempting to improve his lot or to enlarge his knowledge is not a monopoly of faith specifically religious, but is a capacity possessed likewise by political or economic or other faiths. And indeed, even by "scientific" faiths; that is, by the orthodoxies which grow up too in matters of scientific theory, and which sometimes deter run-of-the-mill scientists, or even distinguished ones, from investigating reports of certain facts the theories of the day could not account for; and cause these scientists instead to ignore those facts or to deny them *a priori*. Religious faith, it is quite true, has often enough blinded or reconciled men to various oppressions under which they lived. But faith in, for instance, the politico-economic ideology of communism blinds no less effectively those who have it to the heavy chains in which men actually live where that faith has possessed itself of power; and where, moreover—no doubt with the good intentions which ever pave the way to hell—it exercises power with a ferocity the thoroughness of which hardly finds a parallel even in the darkest pages of religious tyranny. Such tyrannies forget that Utopia, or Paradise, is not at a distant place or time, but is the social state of affairs which, irrespective of theologies or ideologies, automatically comes into existence at the very place and time where two or more men deal with one another both intelligently and in a brotherly spirit. Attainment of the ideal social end consists in employment *now* of means both intelligent and kind.

## Religion? or Theology?

A glance at the evils which have actually been connected with religion causes one to wonder whether the conception of religion set forth in Chapter 8—according to which religion is an essentially beneficent kind of force—is consistent with the historical facts. White, from whose book we have quoted at various points in what precedes, also conceives religion as essentially beneficent, and reconciles this with the record of evils he cites by distinguishing between religion and theology, and by entering the evils to the debit of theology and the goods to the credit of religion.

Morris Cohen, in the essay we have cited, comments on this kind of device—although without referring specifically to White. "In the interests of intellectual honesty," he writes, "we must . . . reject the identification of religion with the mere sentiment of benevolence or with altruistic conduct." To identify religion "with vague altruism rules out not only all the historic, tribal, and national religions, Hinduism, and most of the Old Testament, but also Christianity of the Orthodox, Catholic, and fundamentalist-Protestant type. All post-Hellenic cults have insisted on sacraments like baptism and on the acceptance of dogmas about the Trinity, the incarnation, the fall of man, the atonement, eternal hell, and the like. Worse than that! This 'liberal' or non-dogmatic view is logically bound to apply the term *religious* to philanthropic atheists and communists . . . And indeed there are many who do speak of communism as a religion." [19]

The conception of religion formulated in Chapter 8, however, is far from identifying religion with "the mere sentiment of benevolence or with altruistic conduct." Rather, it holds that to *foster* these is *one* of the functions of religion. Nor does it ignore the fact that dogmas of various sorts are a part of all religions. On the contrary, it conceives religious beliefs as implements for performance of the functions peculiar to the cultural agency termed Religion—implements sometimes effective in various degrees, but sometimes instead stupidly subversive of those functions. Again, the conception of religion we have formulated does not exclude the possibility—explicitly recognized by us as by Marshall—that a person may have no religion and yet may conduct himself "religiously," that is, live—out of the spontaneous impulses of an exceptionally fine nature, instead of out of belief of some set of religious dogmas—in the very manner which it is the proper function of religious dogmas to motivate. Our contention has been that there is a certain kind of social benefit and a certain kind of personal benefit for which a need exists, and that conferring these benefits in cases where nothing else does so is the special task which differentiates the particular kind of social agency called "religion" from those called "art," "science," "government," and so on. Whether, or how well or ill, a given religion actually performs that task in a given society or for a given individual is another question, the answer to which does not touch the contention that religion is the sort of social agency whose distinctive function is to minister to the social and the personal needs we have described. From our empirical point of view, the account which a given religion may itself give of its distinctive function—for instance, to save men's souls from hell and win them heaven—is itself one of the dogmas of that religion—one of the beliefs which in it function as more or less effective or ineffective implements for performance of the social and the personal tasks we have mentioned.

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

We have already referred to medicine in order to illustrate the fact that an agency may be essentially dedicated to a beneficent task, and yet may in practice perform it very imperfectly; or even do mischief instead in many cases, because of ignorance, stupidity, or defects of character in its representatives or in the persons to whose needs it is its business to minister. Perhaps a still more telling illustration, to account for the fact that religion has done much evil notwithstanding that its distinguishing task is to do good of the specific kinds described, would be the following.

The essence of a knife obviously consists in capacity to cut. But a given object that has this capacity relatively to materials such as wood, paper, cheese, etc., may well not have it relatively to certain others, such as stone, steel, etc. Moreover, it may have that capacity in various degrees: a knife may be more or less hard, and more or less sharp or dull, and thus have a broader or narrower range of effectiveness. Again, a knife may become knicked, bent, encrusted with dirt and rust; and even if these do not wholly rob it of the capacity to cut, without which it would no longer be a knife at all, they may nevertheless have objectionable effects. And further, an object which is a knife has unavoidably also a variety of capacities other than that of being used for cutting; for instance, it can be used instead as a paper weight, or as a lever, etc.

Now, what is thus true of a knife is true also, *mutatis mutandis,* of implements of any other kind; and a religion—comprising its beliefs and the observances, attitudes, feelings, practices and ritual connected with the beliefs—is essentially an implement. Therefore, in spite of the beneficent nature of the specific task that is proper to the kind of implement religion is, any particular religion is subject, like a knife, to limitations, failures, subversions, and accidents of various kinds.

In considering the question raised by Cohen—whether Communism is a religion—there would seem to be no reason to deny it the name in spite of its atheism if, as pointed out earlier, belief in a God or gods is not of the essence of religion but is merely a feature of many religions; and if in addition one agrees that the basic beliefs of the communist ideology are matters not of scientific knowledge but only of pious faith —a contention which has a way of making devout Communists particularly furious. That, in practice, a vast amount of gratuitous evil is inflicted on men where Communists are in power, and that this evil is inflicted with the best of intentions, does not mark off but rather assimilates Communism to some of the other historical religions that have had force at their disposal. Their spokesmen too contended in effect, like Mr. Gromyko as spokesman for his "people's democracies," that their purpose was the well-being of all the people, "whether they like it or not." [20] As Bertrand Russell points out, what Marx did was to adapt to Socialism, as St. Augustine did to Christianity, "the Jewish pattern of history, past and future"—a pattern which "is such as to make a powerful appeal to the oppressed and unfortunate at all times." Russell goes on to say that "to understand Marx psychologically, one should use the following dictionary: Yahweh = Dialectical Materialism; The Messiah = Marx; The Elect = The Proletariat; The Church = The Communist Party; The Second Coming = The Revolution; Hell = Punishment of the Capitalists; The Millenium = The Communist Commonwealth." And Russell adds that, in each of these equations, "the terms on the left give the emotional content of the terms on the right, and it is this emotional content, familiar to those who have had a Christian or a Jewish upbringing, that makes Marx's eschatology credible." [21] As someone has recently remarked, the success Communism has actually had has been as a religion, much rather than as an economic or political system.

Three remarks are now apposite in connection with the particular nature of the functions we submitted as peculiar to religion. One of these functions, it will be recalled, was education of the individual's heart, that is, the fostering in him of the noble impulses to justice and self-sacrifice. Now the first point to notice is that this function is performable by a religion not solely, nor indeed most effectively, by *preaching* justice and altruism—which many religions do not do—but also and chiefly by motivating its adherents to *act* in manners that are noble, i.e., that subordinate his private desires to the demands of his group. The *practice* of forms of action noble in this objective sense tends to generate noble impulses and feelings on the subjective side, whether or not justice and altruism be explicitly preached in abstract terms.

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[20] Quoted by G. A. Borgese in the UNESCO volume *Democracy in a World of Tensions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 40.

[21] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1945), pp. 363–64.

A second point is that this is so quite irrespective of whether the demands of the group for such subordination are based on a true conception of what makes for its welfare, or are rooted only in a belief that the gods, on whose favor that welfare is supposed to depend, prescribe the modes of conduct, the sacrifices, ceremonies, practices, etc., which the group demands the individual shall comply with irrespective of the personal cost to him. The noble impulse—the regard for the welfare of the group—which tends to get built up in him by such *de facto* compliance, *is*, in kind, conducive to group welfare even if the particular practices that built up that impulse happened to be of no objective value or even to some extent detrimental.

Lastly, compliance by the individual with the demands of his fellows as supposedly being the demands of the gods, brings to him automatically even in the primitive religions some peace of mind—some feeling of confidence and security—instead of the anxiety that goes with selfish neglect or refusal to comply. And to bring about a measure of such serenity is, we have contended, one of the functions of religion.

# Chapter 11

# SATANY, SATANISM, AND WITCHCRAFT

In the preceding chapter, we considered a number of ways in which religion can become perverted and the functions proper to it thereby subverted; and we examined a variety of historical instances in which this had happened. At the outset, however, we called attention to the fact that, besides perversions of religion, there are also what we referred to as inversions of it. The latter are what we shall now discuss.

## Inversion vs. Perversion of Religion

In the case of perversions of religion, the human agents involved believe themselves to be acting as instruments of the religion they profess, which they conceive as operating for the good of mankind. They so regard themselves notwithstanding that, in fact—through stupidity, ignorance, superstition, or defects of character—their actions tend much rather to subvert the good functions which we have identified as the ones definitive of the nature of religion.

In the case of inversions of religion, on the other hand, men consciously devote themselves to the pursuit of aims which are opposite to those of religion. Whereas considerateness of the rights and the tastes of other persons and generous devotion to their welfare are the attitudes which it is the social task of religion to foster, religious inversion on the contrary is systematic cultivation and deliberate practice of pitiless selfishness or of malicious cruelty. Again, whereas confidence in the universe, deep serenity, and the happy feeling that goes with ever-present readiness to deal with one's fellows justly and benevolently, are the kinds of personal satisfaction which it is the function of religious beliefs to bring to the religious individual; sadistic and masochistic pleasure, on the contrary, or gratification of lust, greed, personal ambition and other passions, in ruthless disregard of cost of it to other sentient beings, are the sorts of personal satisfaction which the practices of inverted religion bring to its devotees.

## "Satany"

Inverted religion will naturally have a variety of types, corresponding *mutatis mutandis* to those which we have found in religion. Thus we may conceive, and perhaps find examples of, naturalistic and paranaturalistic as well as personalistic inversions of religion; and the latter will be capable of being either monodemonistic or polydemonistic. We shall describe more particularly in the sequel the characteristics of the principal of these possible forms of inverted religion. But we shall need a term as comprehensive as the term "religion," wherewith to designate inverted religion considered in abstraction from the variety of particular forms it may take; and the desiderated generic term should be one that, like the term "religion," has adjectival and adverbial forms. Among words in common use, the one which suggests itself most readily as perhaps appropriate for this is Satanism. Yet it is not wholly suitable since it is usually employed to designate worship of Satan conceived as diabolarch—as prince or ruler of demons and other evil spirits—so that Satanism would be the inverse not of religion in general but rather of theistic and particularly of monotheistic religion.

The Hebrew word *satan*, however, simply means adversary or enemy—a meaning which in itself would seem fairly appropriate for what we have in view. Therefore, to designate what, up to this point, we have referred to as inversion of religion or inverted religion, and the various particular forms it may assume, we shall venture to coin and employ from now on the words *satany, satanies.* To refer to the adherents of a satany, we shall use the word *satanists* with uncapitalized initial, reserving the capitalized term *Satanists* for worshipers of devils or of "the Devil," personalistically conceived. Satanism will thus be the name of a particular variety of satany. The general nature of satanic beliefs as contrasted with religious may be described by saying that whereas religious beliefs tend to generate humility, to motivate noble conduct, and to bring serenity to the believer, satanic beliefs, on the contrary, are rooted in pride, sanction meanness, and tend to bring anxiety to those who hold them.

## Spontaneous vs. Rationalized Wickedness

Attention was called earlier to the fact that some persons live in a manner describable as saintly or beautiful, simply because their noble impulses happen to be or to have become mostly stronger than their mean impulses. To designate these persons we borrowed Schiller's term "beautiful souls." The nobility of their behavior is spontaneous instead of rationalized, as on the contrary it is in persons who act nobly not from inclination but because they perceive that obligation so to act is a corollary of the religious beliefs they accept.

Now, similarly, it is possible to be living wickedly in a spontaneous manner, i.e., not because one has committed one's self to the beliefs of one or another satany and perceives that these beliefs sanction or rationally demand evil doing, but simply because one's dominant impulses happen to be the wicked instead of the noble ones. Such persons we may term "ugly souls." Spontaneously wicked living is, indeed, not only possible but doubtless more frequent than is spontaneously saintly living; and wicked living *qua* inspired or sanctioned by acceptance of a satanic creed is less common than is noble conduct motivated by religious beliefs; for organized satanies seem to be much rarer and less influential than are organized religions. The reason for this is not far to seek. Because of their essentially antisocial character, satanies cannot well stand the light of publicity, as on the contrary religions can. Most persons in civilized countries hardly are aware that satanies really exist, i.e., really are believed in and practiced by some persons just as religions are by many more. In the mind of the ordinary man in such countries, Satanism, its Sabbats and its Black Mass, for instance, are things which, if he has heard of them at all, exist, like Mark Twain's Republic of Gondour or More's Utopia, only in the imagination of writers of fiction; or, Satanism, only in books such as J. K. Huysmans' novel, *Là Bas*; or else in chronicles of superstition. Similarly, witchcraft is commonly thought of as only folklore and as taken seriously only by ignorant peasants and savages or by bigoted but deluded witch hunters like Cotton Mather and the Inquisitors of Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the sequel, we shall see that, although the beliefs of the satanies, like those of the religions, may well not be true, nevertheless some persons do accept them, do govern their lives more or less consistently by them, and do resort to practices which, according to those beliefs, are as objectively efficacious as prayer, for instance, is believed to be by convinced adherents of the Christian religion.

In this connection, it is essential, of course, to distinguish between persons who regard themselves as satanists, i.e., as adherents of a satany, and persons who are accused by someone else of being satanists. As Waite points out, a cult regarded by outsiders as what we have called a satany indeed "may be a worship of the evil principle as such, namely, a conscious attempt on the part of human minds to identify themselves with that principle." On the other hand, "it may be the worship of a power which is regarded as evil by other religions, from which view the worshippers in question dissent."[1] We shall have occasion to return to this point farther on.

### Demonistic vs. Naturalistic Satany

We have seen that although most religions are theistic, and more specifically monotheistic, polytheistic, or pantheistic, nevertheless, a religion may be, and some actually are, non-theistic, that is, purely naturalistic. Examples of this are contemporary Humanism and Comte's Religion of Humanity. Original Buddhism, which regards Karma as natural causality, may also be classed as naturalistic; or perhaps better as paranaturalistic, since it believes that not only overt actions and other material events have causes and effects, but also, and at longer range, thoughts, feelings and intentions in themselves.

In the case of satanies, analogous possibilities exist: a satany may be demonistic, and more particularly monodemonistic, polydemonistic, or pandemonistic; or, on the other hand, a satany may be naturalistic, or paranaturalistic.

Just as the three religions mentioned above take a naturalistic view of such efficacy as prayer or other ritualistic acts retained in them may have—i.e., the efficacy would be accounted for by reference to psychological or parapsychological or psychosomatic or other laws of nature—so might a satany account for the efficacy or seeming efficacy of its practices without postulating the existence and intervention of demons or of the Devil, but, similarly, simply by reference to laws. In the case of a paranaturalistic satany, these would be the laws operative in witchcraft. They may be only imaginary, but would be regarded as real by those appealing to them, and as no less natural, even if as less obvious, than the law that unsupported bodies fall to the earth. That "like tends to cause like"—for example, that sticking pins in a puppet image of a person, together with utterances of some special formula, will tend to cause him injury—seems to be the simple paranaturalistic theory on which are based the practices of sympathetic magic. That these practices, if they do work, operate not directly but by enlisting the activity of demons is a possible but not a necessary explanation of their efficacy; just as intervention of God or of the saints is a possible but not a necessary explanation of the efficacy which utterance of blessings or of exorcisms, or the touching of relics, may have.

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[1] A. E. Waite, *Devil-Worship in France* (London: G. Redway, 1896), pp. v, vi.

It is interesting to ask what a purely naturalistic satany, as distinguished from a paranaturalistic, would be. Like contemporary Humanism, it would employ only such means as had been proved efficacious by the experimental research of the natural sciences, and, like Humanism, it would have some general formulas—some articles of faith—rationalizing and sanctioning the impulses actuating it. But whereas in Humanism these impulses are humane ones, they would in a satany be inhumane, and their expressions merciless.

A phrase exemplifying the creed or policy of what may be regarded as a naturalistic satany would be: "The public be damned," once uttered by a certain powerful captain of industry and tacitly adopted by some others. Nowadays certain labor leaders, as well as the elected representatives of various regional or occupational interests, seem to have remorselessly made it their own.

Another example of a naturalistic satany, but one equipped with a theoretically elaborated creed, would be Nietzsche's "superman" philosophy, which exalts individual power and self-mastery as ideal ends, and despises the great mass of ordinary men as bungled and botched—as mere rehearsals by Nature in her attempts to transcend man and achieve superman. This philosophy regards common men as properly slaves and materials for pitiless experiments, and their morality—with its virtues of compassion, mutual aid, personal humility and the like—as a morality fit only for slaves and the individually weak: "A man by no means deserves privileges, either on earth or in heaven, because he happens to have attained to perfection in the art of behaving like a good-natured little sheep." Again, "I regard Christianity as the most fatal and seductive lie that has ever yet existed . . . I urge people to declare war with it. The *morality of paltry people* as the measure of all things: this is the most repugnant kind of degeneracy that civilization has ever yet brought into existence. And this *kind of ideal* is hanging still, under the name of 'God,' over men's heads!!" [2]

Such appeal as Nietzsche's philosophy has, is traceable on the one hand to the inducement it provides for the reader to identify himself as belonging to the "master" class, not that of slaves; and on the other, to the stimulation it brings to man's potentialities of strength, heroism, self-discipline. But evidently, aside from the aesthetic value of the realizations of these, as beheld by the merely contemplative spectator of the historical drama, those heroic potentialities are good rather than evil only if good is what they are devoted to when actualized.

That allegiance to an esthetic ideal can be invoked to justify evil acts is interestingly illustrated by the case of Thomas Wainewright—a man gifted with abilities as a painter, art critic, and writer—who, to make up for his lack of a fortune, poisoned relatives after having had their lives insured in his favor; and who, when eventually reproached with the murder of his sister-in-law, answered: "Yes; it was a dreadful thing to do, but she had very thick ankles." This reply, of course, would have been relevant had the object destroyed been a statue instead of a human being.[3]

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[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1910), Vol. I, pp. 163–64, 166.

[3] Quoted by Oscar Wilde in his essay, "Pen, Pencil, and Poison," reprinted in *The Prose of Oscar Wilde* (New York: H. S. Nichols, 1916), p. 82.

Concerning personalistic satanies we shall speak farther on. Here it may be asked what a pandemonistic satany might be like.

Its metaphysics might resemble the panthelistic one of Schopenhauer, in which the force which pervades the universe or constitutes its very being is an eternally unsatisfied and unhappy, and in this sense damned, will-to-live. But a pandemonistic satany would preach, not as Schopenhauer does, renunciation of such a will-to-live and repudiation of its manifestations in man, but rather espousal and expression of it by the individual.

## Demonology and Theology

In an earlier chapter we analyzed the notion of divinity, as entering into the meaning of such terms as deity, god, divine, theism—concluding that being "divine" implies two characteristics: on the one hand, being supernatural, i.e., mysterious, psychic, and possessed of some superhuman powers; and on the other, being in one or another degree, though predominantly, good rather than evil. Now, if instead of this second characteristic we specify its opposite, to wit, being predominantly evil, but retain that of being supernatural, then the notion so constructed is substantially that of the demonic, devilish or diabolic, as opposite of the divine.

As theology is the science or would-be science which takes the nature and existence of God, or of the gods, and their relation to man, as its central subject matter, so demonology is the science or would-be science which concerns itself essentially with the nature and existence of the Devil, or of demons, and with the relations between them and human beings. Since the devilish and the godly are mutually adversary forces, those two purported sciences are complementaries: every theology has a demonology and every demonology a theology. Each has a theory of what it combats, as well as of what it adores.

In a later chapter, we shall examine the chief arguments which have been offered as proofs that a God, such as conceived by Christian theology, exists; and we shall conclude with Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, and various other philosophers that those arguments, because of one logical defect or another, all fail to prove what they attempt to prove. That is, they leave open at the end, as it was at the start, the question of the existence of such a God as they conceive. The idea of a polytheism, on the other hand, instead of a monotheism, is not often among us considered a real possibility, as on the contrary it was by James.[4] Hence attempts are seldom made to prove that a plurality of gods exists. Generally, it is assumed without argument—though it seems far from self-evident—that polytheism is less likely to be true than monotheism, and that a religion believing in several gods would be inherently of a lower type than one having a single god. But irrespective of the merits of these assumptions, it is probable that any arguments which might be offered to establish the existence of a plurality of gods would be as unsuccessful as have been those advanced for that of a solitary one; and this notwithstanding that the polytheistic hypothesis would be free from some of the paradoxes which have plagued the theologians of monotheism and have called for the exercise by them of so much gratuitous ingenuity.

Now, the hypothesis that a Devil, or a plurality of demons with or without a diabolarch, exists is just as precarious and just as much in need of evidence to substantiate it as is the theistic hypothesis, whether in its monotheistic or polytheistic forms. There are evil feelings and impulses in human beings, of course, which lead them to act in ways that cause their fellows—to say nothing of the animals in man's power—endless sorrow and pain. Moreover, inanimate nature, too, is evil to the extent that its earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, droughts, floods, and so on, cause vast suffering to men and to other sentient beings helpless to escape or control these tremendous forces. But, in the absence of evidence, why personify those forces? Or, for that matter, the other forces of nature which on the contrary happen to contribute to man's welfare?

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[4] See the last two pages of the Postscript to William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1929).

Again, that man's evil impulses are due to the influence of independently existing supernatural evil beings, that is, of demons or of a Devil, is a hypothesis which, although very widespread, stands in need of proof. If there is none, the popularity, nonetheless, of the supposition would be easily accounted for simply as a manifestation of man's desire to dodge personal responsibility for anything blameworthy. And the corresponding hypothesis on the other side—that man's good impulses and feelings derive from the invisible influence on him of a God or of other good supernatural beings—is just as much in need of proof; and, in the absence of it, acceptance of that hypothesis could well be ascribed to man's reluctance, based on frequent bitter experiences at the hands of his fellows, to believe that any good they do springs from roots in their own nature.

Moreover, if one proposes to trace the good and evil acts of man to the influence of supernatural beings that are respectively good and evil, the question returns, and remains there unanswered, how those gods and devils themselves "got that way."

On the other hand, if unseen spiritual beings exist—a hypothesis which, although in need of proof, has at all events never yet been disproved—then it would be but natural to suppose that, as in the case of men, some of those beings are, in various degrees, predominantly good, i.e., well-intentioned, and others predominantly ill-intentioned, i.e., bad. Also, that, as in the case of plants and microbes, some of those spiritual beings have no intentions at all, either good or bad, toward men but just live in their own ways, and that some of these ways simply happen either to thwart or to promote the interests of men. Further, it may well be that just as men influence one another for good or for evil, so likewise some spiritual beings influence men; and perhaps even that, conversely, men sometimes can influence them: corrupt the gods and reform the devils.

These remarks have been intended to make clear that the theistic and the satanistic hypotheses are, from the standpoint of logic and evidence, exactly on a par. That the God of monotheism is a risen demon is neither more nor less plausible than that its Satan is a fallen angel.

## What the Devil Thinks of Himself

Some years ago, a well-known American philosopher, T. V. Smith, delivered a lecture on the ethics of compromise—a subject he was especially fitted to discuss because, in addition to his high competence as a moralist, he had over other philosophers the advantage of having at one time been a member of the United States Congress. There he had learned that compromise, however morally abhorrent where matters of principle are concerned, was nevertheless sometimes imperative since, whatever uncomplimentary names opponents privately applied to one another, each really believed that principles were at stake in what he was fighting for.

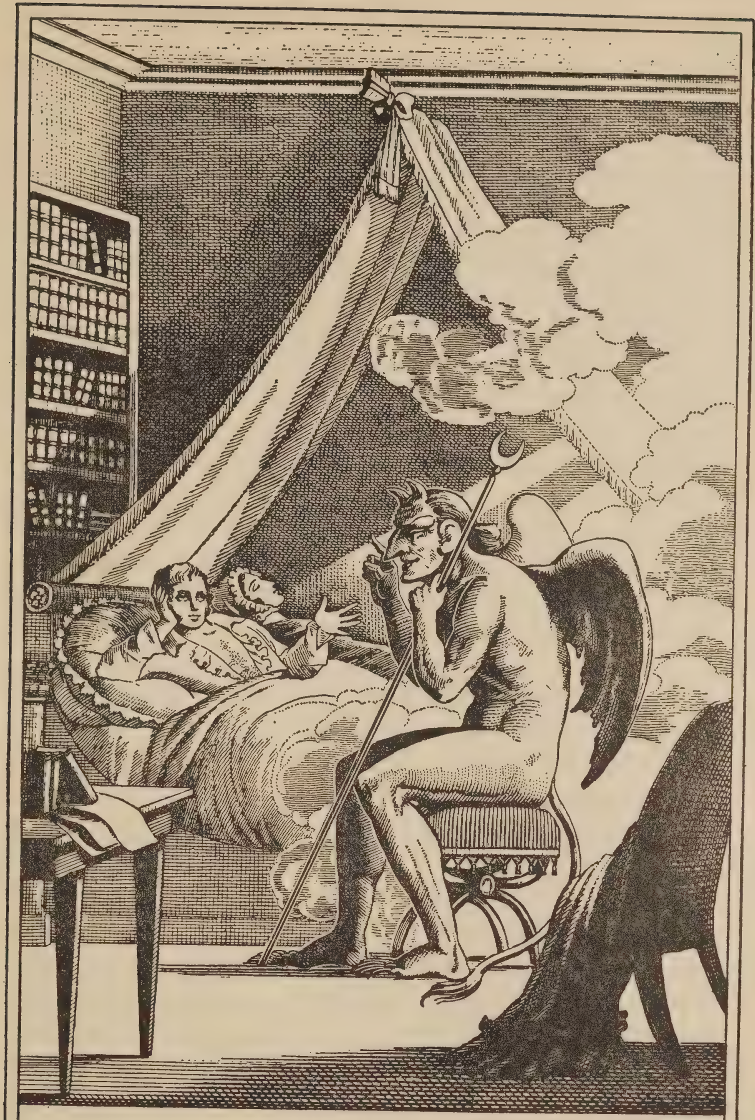
There can be no doubt that, if there is a Devil, he too believes this about his own aims. The portraits of the Devil we are all familiar with are painted by his enemies. The accounts of him drawn by leading questions from purported "witches" under torture or threats of it, or—as in the case of the accusing little girls of Salem—volunteered by visionaries whose heads had been stuffed from infancy with the traditional tales and pictures of Satan, have the same ultimate source. They spring from the imagination of men inventing motives and a character for an opponent or fancied opponent. If it is true that no man is a scoundrel to himself, it is equally true that any man easily is one in the eyes of those who believe themselves thwarted by him. Rivals in love, in politics, on the stage, or in business seldom think highly of one another's motives.

It is safe to say, then, that if Satan were interviewed on the subject of sin, he too, like Calvin Coolidge's preacher, would make clear that he is against it. For Satan, however, as for W. K. Clifford, "sin" might mean the blind faith in the dicta of self-proclaimed authorities, which these call instead a virtue.

But since interviewing Satan himself does not seem practicable, we have to turn, for portraits of him that he might acknowledge as likenesses, to the imagination of men gifted with the love of fair play and having the perspective it brings. Or else we must consult the known character, the declared aims, and the sometimes achievements of men who, although asserted by entrenched orthodoxy to be agents of Satan, have thought of themselves as champions of the weak and the oppressed whom God is said to love.

One sympathetic imaginative account of the Devil is that of Collin de Plancy in his *Le Diable peint par lui-même* (1819), who dedicates the book to his wife, saying "You will often find your portrait in the hero whose adventures I relate . . . You will see here . . . that one may without blushing boast of resembling the Devil in certain respects. A touching kindness, an old-fashioned simplicity, ingenuous manners, virtues sometimes stoical, the inclination to be obliging, disinterestedness, quickness of mind, an original imagination, prankishness without ill-will: there are in the Devil a thousand such happy traits, which you would have the good sense to envy if you did not yourself possess them in high degree."

In his Introduction, the author makes believe that the Devil appeared in his bedroom one night, seated himself on



Entrevue de l'Auteur avec le Diable.

a stool, and had a conversation with him while his wife went on sleeping. Collin quizzes the Devil about his attributes, physical and moral, as painted by legends and theologians. The Devil disclaims most of the alleged moral defects and explains the physical—visible to Collin at the time—by saying that, in accordance with God's order, the Devil has to wear the features people attribute to him—horns, for example, and a tail. "And your ears," Collin asks, "why are they so swollen?" The Devil answers: "I owe them to the exorcists. Every box on the ear these gentlemen administer to the possessed recoil on my ears. Not more than a hundred years ago, my ears were as big as buttocks. But since exorcising is no longer practised, their swelling diminishes day by day."[5] The various tales and anecdotes comprised in the book, which illustrate the Devil's good qualities, are, the title page states, "extracted and translated from demonomanes, theologians, legends, and from diverse chronicles of the somber empire," the specific references to which are given throughout in the text or in the footnotes.

The Devil explains his long nose to Collin, for example, by reference to the anecdote found in the eighth chapter of the Life of St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury in the tenth century, and found also in the fourth of the *Pieuses Gaietés* of Father Angelin de Gaza: St. Dunstan was a blacksmith, and one day, says the Devil, on which "I went to see him without evil intentions, he seized my nose with his pincers and let go only after having stretched it a good foot."[6]

Another and more philosophical account of what Satan could be imagined to think of himself and of God is offered by Anatole France in the last chapter of *La Révolte des Anges*. Satan, on the eve of leading his hosts once more against those of God, falls asleep and dreams that victory has been won.

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[5] Collin de Plancy, *Le Diable peint par lui-même* (Paris: P. Mongie Ainé, 1819), p. xxvii.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

He sees himself on the throne of Heaven, proclaiming himself God, receiving the allegiance of the defeated angels, and savoring the hymns praising his wisdom, his might and his beneficence. Although formerly he shuddered at the thought that suffering was rampant in the world, he now thinks of pain and death as happy even if mysterious effects of his sovereign power and goodness. He condemns intelligence and hates the spirit of inquiry; he values mystery, and, believing he would be diminished if he were understood, pretends that he is beyond possibility of comprehension. A turgid theology drugs his brain.

But, glancing into the abyss where he has cast the defeated, he perceives that the former God is now playing the role which formerly was Satan's own—that of Lucifer, bearer of light and compassionate helper, who, seeing ignorant mankind wallowing in pain and evil, seeks to bring it intelligence, knowledge, and the arts, so that it may achieve freedom and joy.

At this vision, Satan awakens bathed in an icy sweat, and, appalled at the frightful fate which victory would thrust upon him, elects to remain Lucifer and abandons the projected conquest of heaven.

From these imaginary portraits, let us now turn to the facts of history concerning persons that have been alleged to be in league with the Devil. According to Summers, heresy, so called, is "always inevitably and inextricably entangled with attempts on the social order, always anarchical, always political." This he says: "heretics, until they obtain the upper hand, have throughout the ages constantly denied and endeavoured to disguise."[7] Summers believes, moreover, that all the revolutionary movements in history have employed witchcraft, and that "the express design and end of perpetrating evil for evil's sake . . . constitutes the very essence of witchcraft, which is first and foremost the cult of hell." [8]

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[7] Montague Summers, *History of Witchcraft* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1926), p. 13. Cf. his Introduction to the 1928 edition of his translation of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (London: John Rodker, 1928).

In any country which, like these United States, was born of a revolution, what Summers terms "the social order," i.e., the order which happens to be existent, whether political, ecclesiastical, or other, is hardly likely to be generally regarded as automatically sacrosanct. Hindu religion recognizes on the one hand Vishnu as divine embodiment of the principle of conservation, maintenance and stability, but on the other, Shiva also, as embodiment, likewise divine, of the principle of change—of the destruction without which construction of something better would be impossible. Similarly, healthy common sense is neither tory nor anarchistic, but perceives virtue both in stability up to a point, and also in change—by evolution or in extreme cases even by revolution, if this holds solid prospect of a clearly better state of affairs. Hence, common sense does not regard revolutionaries, whether political or religious—or at least the successful ones enshrined in history—as *eo ipso* devils; nor conservatives as *eo ipso* saints. The protagonists of revolution have commonly regarded themselves as earnest workers for the greater welfare of mankind, and no matter how chimerical and deluded may have been the plans of some of them for promoting it, there is abundant historical evidence that many such persons have been high-minded, self-sacrificing, constructive idealists. Like the Inquisitors and the Scottish and the New England witch hunters, they could stomach the cruelties they sometimes inflicted, only because they truly believed themselves, as do surgeons, to be doing what was best under the circumstances both for their victims and for society. But no doubt also, some men of both these classes, and especially some of the lesser men they enlisted as instruments, have been essentially sadists, who welcomed the opportunity which the cloak of "religion," or of "liberation of the oppressed," afforded them to indulge their spontaneous wicked impulses without cost to themselves.

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[8] Montague Summers, *A Popular History of Witchcraft* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1937), p. 101.

As an instance of a man who has been much reviled both as heretic and as revolutionist, but whom the picture of a devil aiming at chaos and resorting to witchcraft to bring it about ludicrously fails to fit, Thomas Paine may be mentioned. Robertson refers to him as "the virtual founder of modern democratic freedom in Great Britain and the States." Yet he was violently attacked both on political and on religious grounds. The same author states that "The essential evil is that the baseness of partisan politics is at all times ready to turn a man's heresy to his political ruin; such being in part the explanation of the gross ingratitude shown to Paine." [9]

As Cohen remarks, "the heterodox opponent of the established religion has often much more real faith than most of its followers. Thus, Theodore Roosevelt was probably representative of Christian America when he referred to Tom Paine as 'a filthy little atheist.' Yet a comparison of their respective writings can leave little doubt that Paine had far more faith than his contemner in a personal God, in the immortality of the soul, and in moral compensation hereafter." [10] In "The Age of Reason," written in 1794 to combat atheism, Paine declares unambiguously: "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy."

But Paine is equally forthright in his disbelief of the creeds of the churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish. "Every national church or religion," he further writes, "has established itself by pretending some special mission from

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[9] John Robertson, *A Short History of Freethought* (New York: Putnam Publishing Co., 1906), Vol. II, pp. 320, 323.

[10] "The Dark Side of Religion," an essay contributed by Morris Cohen to a symposium *Religion Today*, ed. A. L. Swift, Jr., (New York: Whittlesey House, 1933), p. 76.

God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses; the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles, and saints; and the Turks their Mahomet, as if the way to God was not open to every man alike."[11] Paine's above quoted idea of what religious duties essentially consist in is remarkably similar to that of Jesus, whose own religion—as pointed out by Boynton in a recent book[12]—was not Christianity if by this be understood the elaborate conception of the cosmic status and role of Jesus gradually constructed by theologians during the subsequent centuries.

That God thought of Paine not so badly, and protected him, would be suggested by the accident through which he escaped death when imprisoned by Robespierre. He was one of those selected for the guillotine, whose doors in the jail were to be marked with chalk. Being ill with a fever at the time, however, his door stood outside against the wall, wide open, so that the mark was placed on what actually was its inside. By the time men came to pick up the victims, the door had been closed and since the mark was then not visible, Paine was not taken.

Doubtless, however, those who, as Cohen puts it, practically identify religion with "the unquestioning acceptance of traditional conventions or good manners" will say that it was not God's intervention but the Devil's, which thus saved Paine's life, and that this proves him to have been a practitioner of witchcraft!

## Palladism and Satanism

Does Satanism actually exist? Are there today among us persons who secretly practice the cult of the Devil? J. K.

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[11] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (Boston: Josiah Mendum, 1879), pp. 6, 7.

[12] Richard Boynton, *Beyond Mythology* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1951), p. 156.

Huysmans, who answers this question in the affirmative, distinguishes in his preface to Jules Bois' *Le Satanisme et la Magie* between Satanists—who regard Satan as the Prince of Evil bent on evil for evil's sake—and Luciferians or Palladists, among whom he includes Freemasons—who regard Lucifer as the Good Principle and the God of the Church as the Evil One, each conceived more or less as in Anatole France's account of the dream of Satan already cited.

Huysmans believes that both Satanists and Palladists exist —Satanists as individuals and in scattered groups, who attempt to enlist the aid of the Devil in pursuit of selfish or malicious aims, such as personal ambition, lust, hatred, revenge; and Palladists, or more specifically, "New Palladists" as a far-flung organization having an antipope (the first allegedly having been the famous American Freemason, Albert Pike), a college of cardinals, and other organizational features analogous to those of the Church of Rome; and dedicated to the overthrow of the latter.

Huysmans ascribes to Palladists the allegedly numerous thefts of consecrated Hosts from various churches in France —presumably for purposes of their sacrilegious ritual—for he can think of no other persons that would have an adequate motive for such thefts. Hence he regards those thefts as evidence that Palladists really exist. For information about them, he refers to the book *Freemasonry, Synagogue of Satan*, by Léon Meurin, Archbishop of Mauritius; to the short-lived review *Palladium*, edited by Diana Vaughan; and to the revelations of Léo Taxil and of Miss Vaughan after both had been converted to Catholicism. Additional details concerning Universal Masonry and its connection with Diabolism were supplied in Dr. Bataille's *The Devil in the XIXth Century*, and in two books by Domenico Margiotta.

The latter was a high Mason, who came to entertain a violent animosity toward the alleged then Supreme Chief of Freemasonry, Adriano Lemmi; and who, having in vain "long and earnestly desired that Freemasonry should 'vomit him' [viz., Lemmi] from her breast . . . decided to vomit himself" and to embrace Catholicism.[13]

The merits of the evidence from these sources, as to existence of a connection between Masonry and Diabolism, are examined with care and impartiality by Waite, in his book, *Devil-Worship in France*, published in 1896. He concludes that the connection is far from having been established—a conclusion which, in the light of later developments, does credit to his judgment. The developments are related by E. Sydney Hartland, a past-president of the Anthropological Section of the British Association, in his article on Satanism in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, published in 1921. The story is so extraordinary and edifying as to be worth summarizing here. It is as follows.

"Léo Taxil" was the pen name of a Frenchman, Gabriel Jogand, born in 1854 and educated at a Jesuit college, who then broke away from Catholicism and engaged in vituperative attacks against the Roman church and everybody connected with it. In 1881, he became a Freemason, but left the order the same year in consequence of a quarrel. In 1895, he professed to be converted, repudiated his old opinions and former Masonic associations, expressed contrition, and was eventually received back into the Church. He published a series of blood-curdling revelations about Freemasonry, and later went to Rome, where he was received by Leo XIII, and where his labors against the Freemasons were approved and blessed.

Among his allegations was the assertion that there are female Freemasons. This was confirmed by A. M. Ricoux, who professed to have obtained a code of secret instructions to Masonic Supreme Councils and Grand Lodges, from which he also learned that Albert Pike was the Sovereign Pontiff of Freemasonry. It eventually turned out that "A. M. Ricoux" was just one of the pseudonyms under which Taxil wrote, to provide "independent" substantiation for his allegations concerning Masonry.

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[13] Waite, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

Dr. Bataille, however, was real, and was a German by the name of C. Hacks. He asserted that he had met in the United States a Miss Diana Vaughan, a Palladist, who, he further asserted, quarreled with highly placed persons in the Palladist organization, and as a result started publishing a review *Le Palladisme régénéré et libre* (or *Palladium*), of which, however, only three numbers appeared. Then, in 1895, Diana Vaughan's conversion to Catholicism was announced, and she began publishing, serially and with great éclat, her autobiography, *Mémoires d'une ex-palladiste.* All the "revelations" were denied and denounced by the Freemasons, but accepted by many ecclesiastics and devout laymen. Demands that Diana should be produced were eluded on the plea that she had to remain in hiding to protect her life from the Freemasons, but her existence was credited by many dignitaries of the Church, including the Bishop of Grenoble, who compared her to Joan of Arc.

There were some doubters, however, and, at the Antimasonic Congress at Trent, at the end of 1896, Léo Taxil delivered an impassioned harangue, affirming the existence of Diana Vaughan, and declaring that he had himself seen her. He got enthusiastic applause and was received by the Bishop at the episcopal palace.

About two weeks later, however, Bataille repudiated all his own revelations, declaring in German and French newspapers that his book and Diana Vaughan were mere *Märchen*—fairy tales—and a thorough swindle. Taxil, however, stuck to his guns a few months longer. But, finally, in Paris on April 19, 1897, "he confessed that Palladism and Diana Vaughan were inventions of his own, and that the revelations that had poured forth so lavishly from his press were a gigantic fraud, or, in his own euphemism, 'a mystification' "; and, cynically, he thanked the Catholic press and bishops for the aid they had unwittingly given him in organizing it. Hartland concludes his article with the reflection that "so remarkable a hoax has seldom, if ever, been perpetrated; and it could not have succeeded in an environment less dense with ignorance and fanaticism."

In the light of the whole episode, it is interesting to find Summers writing in 1926 without a word of explanation that "In the nineteenth century both Albert Pike of Charleston and his successor Adriano Lemmi have been identified upon abundant authority as being Grand Masters of societies practising Satanism, and as performing the hierarchical functions of 'the Devil' at the modern Sabbat."[14]

As to the true character of Freemasonry, W. K. Walker, Librarian, Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons of New York, states that "universal brotherhood is probably the most widely known ideal of the fraternity. Tolerance of diverse religious 'denominations and persuasions' was the first principle adopted in the 1723 constitutions, and the second and sixth urged loyalty to local government and avoidance of political controversy. Mutual assistance and the promotion of secular education are found as far back in time as the reputation of the fraternity extends."[15] And he mentions that various charitable institutions have been established, and philanthropic activities promoted, by Masonic organizations.

## Satanism and Witchcraft

So much, then, concerning Palladism as distinguished by Huysmans from Satanism. He claims, however, to have far more direct knowledge of the latter. There are priests, he states, "who have organized groups where they celebrate the Black Mass"; and he mentions as a known example Canon Docre, who "has organized in Belgium a demoniac group of young men." One of Docre's victims, Huysmans states, "described to me the frenzy of this priest, shaking with anxiety, shouting some evenings: I am afraid, I am afraid! and managing to reassure himself . . . only by mouthing diabolic invocations and desecrating the Eucharist." [16]

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[14] Summers, *History of Witchcraft, op. cit.*, p. 8. Concerning the whole Léo Taxil affair, see, besides Hartland's article, one by E. P. Evans: "A Survival of Mediaeval Credulity," *Popular Science Monthly*, (March-April, 1900), 577–86, 706–15; and J. Ricks *Leo XIII und der Satanskult* (Berlin: 1897).

[15] In his article, "Masons," in *Collier's Encyclopedia.*

Jules Bois' book, based on a great deal of research, has much to report concerning witches and sorcerers, the evocation of the Devil, the Sabbat, pacts with Satan, the Black Mass, Incubi and Succubi, spells of black magic, exorcisms, and so on. The style of this book, however, penned as it is by a poet, tends to be lyrical in contrast to that of Summers, one of the most erudite of contemporary scholars in this field.[17] Like Huysmans and Bois, Summers is fully convinced of the reality of Satan and of Satanism, of witches and of witchcraft: "I am perfectly certain that there are witches today—both men and women who do a great deal of harm by their foul practices and bring ill-luck to people."[18] As evidence that witchcraft is practiced even in our day, Summers mentions and apparently accepts quite at their face value a number of newspaper reports—among others, a letter to *The Times* in 1930 by a man concerning a Caithness "witch" stating that "on one occasion when a farmer refused to sell her a young cow, saying he needed the milk himself, the witch charmed the animal so that she could yield no more milk, but remained dry." [19] One wonders what a veterinary would have had to say about the cause of the cow's trouble.

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[16] Preface to Jules Bois' *Le Satanisme et la Magie* (Paris: L. Chailley, 1895), pp. xix, xx.

[17] He is the author of a *History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, a *Geography of Witchcraft, A Popular History of Witchcraft, Witchcraft and Black Magic*, etc.

[18] Summers, *A Popular History of Witchcraft, op. cit.*, p. 259.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

We shall draw upon both of these authors among others for a few samples of what, in the concrete, Satanism and witchcraft are, or are believed to be.

### The Witches' Pact with Satan

First, we may ask, what is a witch?—this term being taken to designate equally sorcerers and sorceresses. Bodin, an eminent sixteenth century writer on the subject, answers:

> Sorcerer is he who by Diabolical means knowingly strives to attain something. I have set down this definition which is necessary not only for understanding this treatise, but also for the judgments which have to be rendered against Sorcerers, which has been omitted until now by all those who have written about Sorcerers, and nevertheless it is the foundation on which it is necessary to build this treatise. Let us therefore deduce in detail [what is implicit in] our definition. First I have put in the word, "Knowingly": since it is a fact that error cannot at all imply consent, as the law says: so that the sick man who employs in good faith a diabolic prescription given him by a sorcerer, whom he thought to be a good man, is not [himself] sorcerer, for he has a just cause of ignorance: But not if the sorcerer declares to him [the truth], or invokes evil spirits in his presence as sometimes is done: which I have put in only as an example, and which will be more amply stated farther on in its place. But one must know which are Diabolic means . . . [etc.] [20]

Summers tells us that "the first business of a candidate who desired to become a witch was to make a formal compact with Satan" in person, or with some wizard acting for Satan. In the pact, the applicant swears allegiance to the Devil or offers to do so if the latter aids him to attain the things he wishes. Some of these pacts are written and signed in duplicate by both parties, one copy being delivered to the Devil. If it can be somehow recovered, his ownership of the soul of the witch lapses.[21] The same author cites seventeenth century acknowledgements and exhibitions by witches of such papers, sometimes signed in blood; in particular "the most famous and infamous of these written pacts with Satan," that of Urbain Grandier, of Loudun fame, whom we mentioned earlier—"a holograph which is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris."

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[20] Jean Bodin, *De La Démonomanie des Sorciers* (Paris: Jacques du Puys, 1581), p. 1. The above is a literal translation of Bodin's words. They remain the same in the edition of 1587, which is the most complete. Dr. Summers praises and makes much of Bodin's definition of a witch, but, in his *Witchcraft and Black Magic* (London: Rider & Co., 1945), p. 28, he translates it very inaccurately, injects into his translation of the rest of the passage statements Bodin does not make at all, and suppresses some which Bodin does make.

A facsimile of this document may be seen in *The Mirror of Magic* (p. 240) by Kurt Seligman, who refers to it as "a pact with Lucifer, 'found' in Grandier's house. It is signed by the priest, and countersigned by the dignitaries of hell: Lucifer, Beelzebub, Satan, Elimi (?), Leviathan, and Astaroth."

The body of the document, to say nothing of the signatures, is decipherable, if at all, only by specialists familiar with the script of those days and, hypothetically, also with the symbolical seals of those demons. Seligman does not furnish a statement of its content, nor say whether it has really been deciphered. Grandier was in prison at the time, and one therefore may, as Seligman apparently does, suspect that the document was "found" in Grandier's house only because it had been "planted" there for the purpose. It should be remembered that Grandier, who at first had been cleared after the investigations ordered by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and who maintained his innocence of witchcraft to the last, was finally convicted only as a result of the eventual intervention of Cardinal Richelieu, against whom Grandier years before had written a libelous discourse.

That such pacts, however, actually are written and signed, even if not delivered to Satan in person, by would-be sorcerers —who of course believe in the Devil as thoroughly as does

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[21] Summers, *A Popular History of Witchcraft*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff.

Summers—is very likely true. The latter mentions that a French barrister, in a lecture in 1929, reported having witnessed from hiding the invocation of the Devil and the offering to him of a written compact by a candidate. Summers comments: "That the fiend did not appear was doubtless owing to the fact that these ceremonies were being spied upon and overseen by those not of the wizard fraternity." [22] A simpler explanation will doubtless suggest itself to the skeptical reader; as well as doubts concerning the objective efficacy of the practices with which sorcerers are charged.

The account given by Jules Bois of the contents and making of the pact is as follows:

> One abjured baptism and the Christian faith, gave up obedience to God, repudiated the Virgin Mary's patronage . . . denied the sacraments, trampled the cross and the images of the virgin and of the saints. Eternal fidelity and vasselage to the prince of Darkness were sworn on his black and accursed scriptures. 'Never,' the candidate declared, 'shall I return to my former faith or observe ecclesiastical demands; but I shall go without delay to the place of assembly. I shall do there what the other witches do, I shall strive to enlist others to their belief.' And the Prince answered: 'I guarantee thee, in return, joys which thou hast not yet tasted, immense ones, in this world and the other, which thy very fancy has not dreamt of.' [23]

A lock of hair, nail parings, some bit of clothing, or other personal object is given the Devil in token of allegiance. The neophyte asks the Devil to inscribe his name on the book of death, and promises to offer Satan the sacrifices that please him—little children killed by witchcraft. The Devil then puts his mark on the neophyte, who again repudiates Christianity and swears to keep secret his commerce with Satan.

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[23] Jules Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–3. Summers' *History of Witchcraft*, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–89, gives at length the eleven articles in which "a solemn and complete profession of Witchcraft" was held to consist according to the *Compendium Maleficarum* of Francesco-Maria Guazzo, published in 1608. See also John Ashton, *The Devil in Britain and America* (London: Ward & Downey, 1926), chap. xi; Theda Kenyon, *Witches Still Live* (New York: Ives Washburn, Inc., 1929), chap. v, "The Initiation of the Witch", who considers instances in various primitive tribes, as well as accounts from the Christian lore of witchcraft. An extensive bibliography of witchcraft and Satanism is given at the end of Summers' *History of Witchcraft.*

Bodin cites Paul Grilland, who in his book on Sortileges relates that, during the trial of three witches in 1523 in the Duchy of Spoletto, "the youngest after promise that she would be let go, confessed that 14 years before an old witch had taken her to an assembly of sorcerers, where there was a Devil who made her renounce God, and the faith and religion, and swear to be faithful and obedient to all the Devil's commands, with her hand on a book which contained some very obscure writings; and that she would always come to the night revels when told, and would bring all those she could induce to come. And the Devil promised her joy and felicity eternal."

## Transportation to the Sabbat

Witches are said to be associated in local "covens"—groups of 13, of whom the thirteenth member is supposed to be either Satan himself or some demon representing him. Periodically, there is held a Sabbat, which is a small or large assembly of witches in some deserted, isolated spot, usually at midnight, and lasting until the crowing of the cock at dawn. If the place is near, the witches go there on foot; but if far—to a Grand Sabbat—they rub themselves with an unguent and are able to travel there through the air at great speed. Such magical transportation, Jean Bodin tells us, "occurred after the unguent was applied, and sometimes without unguent; sometimes on a he-goat, sometimes on a winged horse, sometimes on a broom or stick, sometimes without any stick or beast . . ." [24] He reports further concerning the trial of the witches of Loches:

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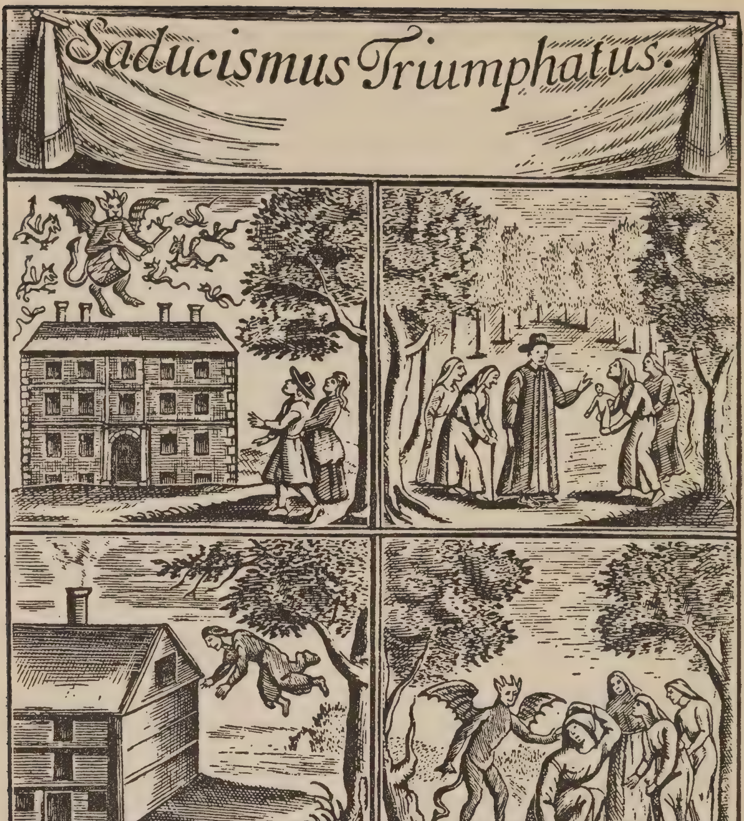
[24] Bodin, *op. cit.*, p. 84.


Saducismus Triumphatus.
Faithorne fe.

There was a poor man who noticed that his wife sometimes went out during the night and remained away a good part of it. She said she went to the privy, or to visit her neighbor to do a washing. Her husband, having found that she was lying and believing she had a lover, threatened to kill her if she did not tell him where she went. Seeing herself in danger, she told him the truth, and as proof, said that he could come too if he wished. She gave him some unguent with which both greased themselves, and after they pronounced certain words, the Devil transported them from Loches to the heaths of Bordeaux, which are at the least 15 days journey from Loches. The man, finding himself in the company of a large number of unknown warlocks and witches and of hideous devils in human shape, started to say "My God, where are we?" [At the mention of the name of God] the assembly instantly disappeared and he found himself wandering naked in the fields till morning . . . On his return to Loches, he went straight to the judge of the criminal court, who, after hearing the story, had the woman seized. She con-

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This illustration is a reproduction of the engraving at the beginning of Part II of Joseph Glanvil's *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, published in London in 1726. The six pictures of which the engraving consists are illustrations for some of the paranormal episodes related in the second chapter of Part II. In the left-hand column, the first picture is an imaginative representation of the "drumming demon" of Tedworth, which disturbed the house of Mr. Mompesson in 1661 after the latter had impounded the drum of a drummer who had been obtaining money under false pretenses (pp. 270 ff.). The picture underneath represents a female witch, Julian Cox, of Taunton, Somersetshire, whom a woman declared she had seen flying into her chamber window (p. 327). The third picture is of the levitation of Richard Jones of Shepton Mallet, who had allegedly been bewitched by a woman, Jane Brooks (pp. 288–89). The top illustration in the right-hand column is of the assembly of witches in the Common near Trister Gate, Wincaunton, with the "Man in Black," who was the Devil (p. 296). Under this is depicted Margaret Jackson, the Scottish witch, giving herself to the Black Man "from the top of her head to the sole of her foot" (p. 394). The last picture represents a lame woman of Amsterdam, Jesch Claes, who one night heard a voice promising she would be cured, and who, then seeing the apparition of a beautiful youth of some ten years of age clad wholly in white, was cured (pp. 359–60).

Glanvil's book, as its title indicates, was intended to do away with skepticism concerning the reality of witchcraft and of good and evil spirits. As to witchcraft, he writes: "Deluding, Cheating, and Hurting, by the Power of an *evil Spirit*, in *Covenant* with a wicked Man or Woman: This is our Notion of a *Witch*" (p. 227).

> fessed point by point all we have related, and freely acknowledged her guilt.[25]

Another episode, cited by the same author, may serve at the same time to introduce the subject of the nature of the Sabbat. He writes: "Jehan Chartier, who wrote the history of Charles VII, says that Guillaume Edeline, Doctor of the Sorbonne, was condemned as a sorcerer on Christmas Eve 1453 and confessed that he had several times been transported during the night to assemblies of sorcerers, and had there renounced God, and adored the Devil in the shape of a he-goat, kissing him on the posterior"—a stercoral rite, incidentally, which is mentioned again and again, with varying details, in reports of the Sabbat.[26] The Sabbat, of which more or less specific accounts are given by the numerous authors who have discussed it, may in general terms be described as an orgy and revelry, at which the Devil in person or some demon presides, and at which the assembled witches worship him, eat and drink, dance back to back a ritual dance, engage in obscenities, couple with demons, and utter blasphemies. Then there is celebrated with a consecrated Host a parody of the Mass—the sacrilegious Black Mass.

An outline of the evolution of this revolting, obscene ceremony is given by Lancelin,[27] who, in another work, sets forth its essential significance as follows: "What is the aim of the Black Mass, if not to compel the God of On-High to materialize himself in the Host, and there hold him prisoner after a fashion, in order, verbally, to plague him with invective; and, physically, to torture him, martyrize, soil and pollute him? Hence, every assembly of Satanists has its genuinely ordained

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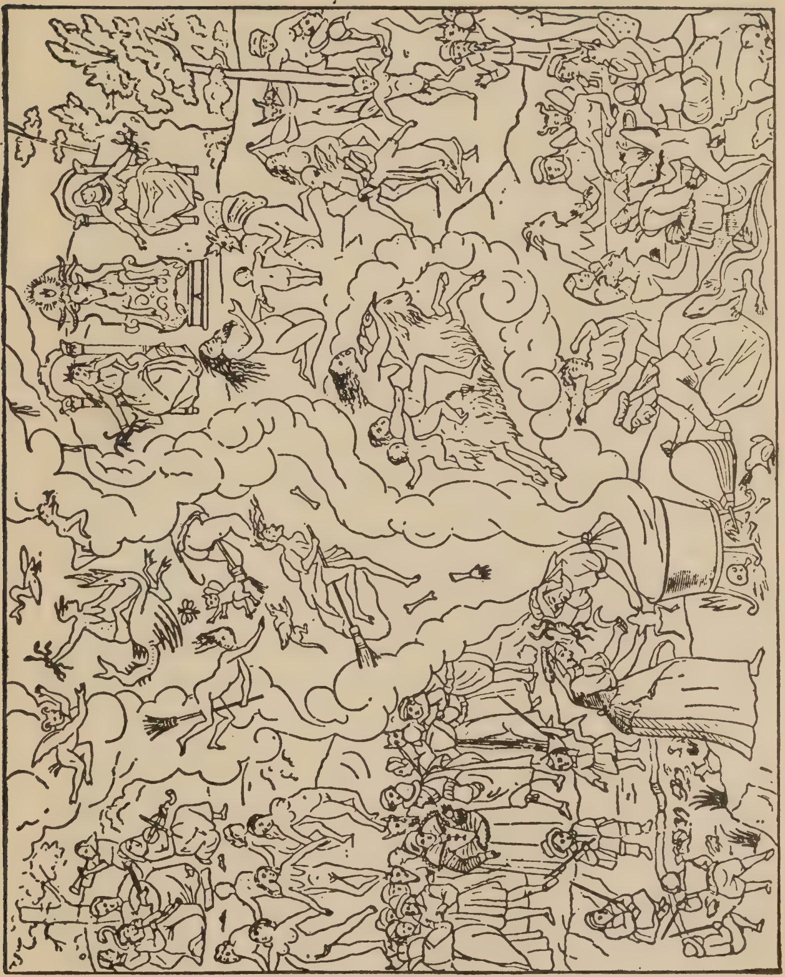
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 81. In the remainder of his 4th chapter, Bodin relates a number of similar accounts.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 81. Cf. Summers' *History of Witchcraft*, p. 137.

[27] Charles Lancelin, *Histoire Mythique de Shatan* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1903), pp. 141–84.



THE SABBAT. John Ziaruko

[but renegade] priest."[28] Lancelin adds that a certain such priest was mentioned to him in Paris, who, for twenty cents, would sell a consecrated Host.

## The Mischief of Witches

The activities of witches, however, are not limited to participation in the Sabbat. There they are ordered and given the means to revenge themselves on persons who thwart them, and to do gratuitous mischief. One version of the nature of their equipment for this is given by Bodin, when he reports that, at an assembly of witches, the Devil, in the shape of a great black he-goat, finally burns up—each of the witches gathering some of the ash. This has magical powers which enables them to cause various forms of mischief: to cause the ox or the sheep or the horse of an enemy to die, to make some person ill, to make men perish, or a tree, or a child, or to ruin crops by causing a storm, etc.[29]

As an instance of the pernicious activity of witches, Summers mentions that "in 1617 three Guernsey witches . . . were tried on multiplied charges. The household of James Gallienne, his wife and children had been cursed, and many other depositions of neighbors proved the accusation. Cattle died, mares miscarried, cows could give no milk, sheep sickened and fell, children and women were taken ill, men were lamed and palsied . . . Horrible black pimples broke out on the bodies of the afflicted persons; insects swarmed in their houses, and lice in such abundance that they had to be swept away with brooms. The witches were found guilty by the Royal Court . . . they confessed, and were very justly strangled and burned at the stake. At Bedford, about 1637, old

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[28] Charles Lancelin, *Le Ternaire Magique de Shatan* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1905). Details of the Black Mass may be found in Kenyon's *Witches Still Live*, chap. viii; in Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, pp. 208-40; in Huysmans, *Là-bas*, chap. xix; and elsewhere.

[29] Bodin, *op. cit.*, pp. 84 ff.

Gammer Rose amongst other charges was accused of making 'a man to be always lowsie.' The matter was proved beyond any question." Again, "In Guernsey, not many years ago, a witch ruined the melons by the blight of a small black fly which the scientists found it impossible to recognize." [30]

In 1950, the following item appeared in the *Providence* (R.I.) *Evening Bulletin:*

> Amarillo, Tex., July 24—(AP)—What killed 38 head of Sam Wolford's cattle?
>
> Loss of heifers and calves valued at $12,000 is developing into a first rate mystery.
>
> In less that 24 hours the cattle died at Wolford's ranch. The bodies were found scattered over a low spot in a two-section pasture where an old gas well is located.
>
> A veterinarian said yesterday a Dallas chemical laboratory had been unable to determine the cause from numerous tests.
>
> The gas well in the pasture where the cattle died was in production for several years. It was not known to be a producer of poisonous gases. Oil men said it was "impossible" for such a well to suddenly begin producing poison gas.

It will be interesting to see whether the investigation being made will eventually ascribe these deaths of cattle to witchcraft, as doubtless would have been done in the seventeenth century in Guernsey!

## Evocation of the Devil

The invocations and magical procedures employed by witches to summon the Devil and make him appear bodily are often referred to in the literature of demonology. From it, dramatists have borrowed as occasion arose. The evocation of Mephistopheles by Faust, in Goethe's drama, is one of the most widely known instances of this. We shall, however, turn for illustration to the testimony of a modernly educated, hard-headed, skeptical contemporary explorer for an account of an evocation—and appearance—of the Devil witnessed by him in Tibet some years ago. This account is interesting not only because of its source and its vividness, but also because it incidentally confirms the idea we found in Collin de Plancy, that, if and when "the Devil" appears, he appears in the form he is conceived to have by those who summon him; as indeed likewise do Jesus, the Virgin, or the saints, in the private or collective visions of the pious to whom they appear, and whom, moreover, these personages address in the French or Spanish or German or other vernacular of the place and time.

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[30] Summers, *Popular History of Witchcraft, op. cit.*, pp. 54–55. For a summary of the variety of wicked aims which, according to the *Grimoires*, the Devil promises to enable the witch to attain, see Jules Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, pp. 125–33.

The explorer mentioned, Harrison Forman, relates in 1934 that when his business of selling aircraft to the Chinese Government had more or less come to an end, he had organized a motion-picture expedition to Chinese Eastern Turkestan, which expedition, however, was scattered by bandits. But he learned that he might be able to get into Tibet, eventually did so, and made the acquaintance of a Tibetan sorcerer, Old Sherap, of the old Bön cult, who regarded him too as a sorcerer, on the strength of the Epsom salts and the few other drugs he carried with him. Sherap offered to take him, elaborately disguised as a Tibetan, to an assembly of sorcerers, which was to take place at dusk in a clearing in the forest for the purpose of evoking Yama, the King of Hell.

Some twenty sorcerers were sitting there about a flat-topped rock, on which the Grand Wizard eventually climbed, equipped with the traditional implements: a *kangling,* which is a flute made of a human thigh-bone, a cup made of a human skull, a bell, and the *dorje* which represents a thunderbolt. After a time, he blew on the flute and drank human blood from the skull, the sorcerers swaying and chanting repeatedly, "Yamantaka! Yamantaka! Yamantaka!"

Eventually, Yama began to appear:

> It was the glaring, bulging eyes of Yama which I saw first . . . They stared at us, filled with malevolence . . . To right and left of the eyes were strange mists . . . The mists shifted, and began to take form . . . until, like some evil flower bursting suddenly into bloom, they became all the thirty-four arms of Yama, with the thirty-four hands, each of which grasped some instrument of destruction . . . Then the body began to form. And the main head grew into being about the eyes. Then all the other heads . . . until there were nine of them . . . And all of them were vaguely shrouded in transparent bluish flames. . . . Then the shoulders, over each of which hung a garland of human skulls . . . And the gross legs, of which there were sixteen, stretched down to the gross feet, which rested upon the bowed backs of beasts and men . . . But Yama was only the beginning. After his coming the lesser demons and devils came willingly enough . . . the demon of Lust . . . His sensuous face was twisted with unholy desire . . . a writhing demon was he, whose twistings were the twistings of lusting men and women . . . The next to come was the demon of Hunger. His ribs showed through his skin—if skin it was. I could see the gnawing of his stomach as it went mad for food, *any* kind of food . . . And there was the demon of Anger . . . with a face all twisted with passion . . . There were other devils and other demons; after a time . . . Yama himself began his *danse macabre*. And his dance was the most horrible of all, for every movement of it mocked at the miseries of mankind.[31]

Eventually, the whole apparition began to fade, and finally vanished. The sorcerers departed in silence, each going his own way, and Old Sherap asked Forman: "And what now dost thou believe?" Forman answered, "My friend, I tell thee in all sincerity: I do not know. I think I saw Yama and his devils and demons. Just now I am sure I saw them, and they were as thou hadst described them to me. What I shall think, what I shall believe to-morrow, I have not the slightest idea." And he states at the last, that, as no longer a hard-shelled skeptic, but rather now an agnostic, he finds himself unable to deny "that there was *something* in that twilight in the high Tibetan forest which I could not, and cannot describe in any way that entirely satisfies me."

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[31] "I See the King of Hell" by Harrison Forman, *Harper's Magazine* (December, 1934). A condensation of it was published in *The Reader's Digest* (December, 1937).

### What Shall We Think?

What, now, are we to think of all the material we have cited, relating to the Devil, to witches, to their aerial transportation to the Sabbat, the magical spells by which they plague man and beast, and so on? Is it all, as most of modern educated opinion would assert, nothing but a lot of ignorant superstition? Or are we to believe, with Summers, that for the most part the reports are trustworthy, and hence that devils and witches really exist, that witchcraft works, and that it is rampant among us? Or shall we say that magic, whether black or white, sometimes does work, but then only in perfectly natural even if ill-understood ways which do not require the existence and intervention of divine or devilish spirits?

Summers, in the Introduction to his *History of Witchcraft,* declares: "In all that I have written, I have gone to original sources, and it has been my endeavour fairly to weigh and balance the evidence, to judge without heat or prejudice, to give the facts and the comment upon them with candour, sincerity, and truth." On p. 63 of the same book, however, he quotes Pierre de Lancre's question: "After God himself has spoken of magicians and sorcerers, what infidel dare doubt that they exist?" Summers also states that "the erudite Sprenger in the *Malleus Maleficarum* expressly declares that in his opinion a denial of the possibility of Witchcraft is heresy." But, of course, Summers is neither infidel nor heretic, and this implies that he is obligated to approach the whole subject with full initial acceptance of what the Scriptures and the Church have to say about it.

Unfortunately, piety and orthodoxy, together with vast knowledge of the works of the "authorities" in this field and a sincere desire to get at the truth, are one thing; and adduction of scientifically objective experimental or statistical evidence is quite another thing, which hardly consists in citation of statements from old books that practice of witchcraft by some wretched crone, and efficacy of it, was abundantly "proved" by depositions at the time, or even by her own free admissions. Too often today, written confessions "freely" given to the police by a prisoner are repudiated in court by him as false and as having been made only under undue pressure, psychological if not physical. Seligman remarks con-concerning the free admissions reported by De Lancre to have been made by the Labourd witches, that "no doubt they preferred the voluntary confession to the excruciating procedures prescribed by the sixteenth-century laws for the extortion of the truth. These wenches surpassed each other in fantastic accounts, of which many are of a nature that forbids reproduction." Concerning witch-hunting in those days, he further points out that ". . . witch persecution soon became an *industry*. It employed judges, jailers, torturers, exorcists, woodchoppers, scribes, and experts, and the abolition of the trials would have caused an economic crisis. All those who found their livelihood within the orb of persecution were interested in its continuation. There was no escape: the witches had to confess . . . One of the most sensible opponents of these trials, the Jesuit, Friedrich von Spee (1591-1635) declared: 'Often I have thought that the only reason why we are not all wizards is due to the fact that we have not all been tortured. And there is truth in what an inquisitor dared to boast lately, that if he could reach the Pope, he would make him confess that he was a wizard.' "[32]

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[32] Kurt Seligman, *Mirror of Magic* (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1948).

Summers, it is true, is familiar with, and in the sixth chapter of his *History of Witchcraft* and elsewhere makes extensive reference to, the paranormal phenomena observed and investigated with scientific precautions by a variety of eminent and at first highly skeptical men of science. In support, for instance, of the allegations that witches fly bodily through the air to the Sabbat, he mentions the remarkable levitations of the famous medium D. D. Home, of children, and of a lady, repeatedly witnessed by the eminent physicist, Sir Wm. Crookes, in his own home and under his own conditions, which he reported in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* in 1874. Summers, however, ignores the fact that these levitations were of at most a few feet and of only a few seconds' duration, and were rare and difficult to obtain; whereas, according to the lore of witchcraft, any wench that has but sworn allegiance to the Devil need only grease herself with magic ointment and utter a few mysterious words to fly at wish and with the greatest of ease for miles through the air.

One can only comment that if some witch would but perform the feat under strict scientific observation a few times, she would both quickly gain riches for herself, wherewith to corrupt men as she pledged herself to do in her pact with Satan, and would in addition recruit for him in short order vast numbers of souls eager for possession of similar magical powers. But of course, that no witch does come forth so to perform the feat is easily accounted for. There is an explanation *ad hoc*, which automatically meets skepticism also in any other such case—namely, that God allows the Devil only a moderate amount of power to capture human souls!

Summers lumps under the name of Spiritism both the seances and beliefs of the Spiritualists, and the investigations of paranormal phenomena by such eminent men of science as Crookes, Lodge, Richet, Flammarion, and others. He refers to Spiritism as a "mighty movement at which it were folly to sneer, which it is impossible to ignore," and acknowledges that many good people, many sincere seekers after truth, have engaged in it for years without being conscious of any physical or moral harm, and indeed that Spiritism "has been a sweet solace to many in most poignant hours of bitter sorrow and loss." Nevertheless, he tells us, "we must get down to the bed-rock of fact"—which is that "Spiritism has been specifically condemned on no less than four occasions by the Holy Office!" Hence "modern Spiritism is merely Witchcraft revived . . . some, at least, of the manifestations must necessarily be ascribed to Satanic intervention since in no other manner can they be understood or explained."[33]

On this whole subject, the present writer has an open mind: he is willing and more or less able to believe anything—*for the reality and the nature of which good evidence is available.* He has little patience with those Humanists for whom the word "Supernaturalism" is as a red rag to a bull because they are so intoxicated with the remarkable achievements of the natural sciences that they tacitly assume the universe can have no other dimensions than those already discovered by those sciences; and therefore that any report of facts that would indicate otherwise can be dismissed *a priori* as necessarily but superstition, mythology, delusion, or wishful thinking. But the writer has no more patience with those pious persons for whom "evidence" means folklore, hypostatized hopes and fears, the beliefs of revered ancient authors, or the *ipse dixit* of the authorities of one or another religion.

For his own part, he proposes to let his opinions be shaped only by genuinely scientific evidence, such as may now exist or may become available day by day, concerning the matters in view; that is, concerning questions such as whether purely spiritual beings exist; whether any that exist are diabolic, divine or merely human, (or, for that matter, are fairies, gnomes, gremlins, dissociated personalities, or something else!); whether any of them influence and are influenced by men, and if so, how, how much, and to what effect; and, more generally, what powers are or are not possessed by such spiritual forces or beings, if any, as there may be reasons to believe exist. What seems to him unqualifiedly blameworthy in these as in other matters is the ostrich policy—whether practiced by pious believers of religious dogmas, who shut their minds to any interpretation of the facts other than the orthodox one; or whether practiced by equally pious skeptics among scientists, who shut their minds to the possibility that some of the facts reported really occur, and, like the learned men who refused to look through Galileo's telescope, refuse even to investigate.

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[33] Summers, *History of Witchcraft*, *op. cit.*, pp. 268–69.

## Chapter 12

# ACQUISITION AND CULTIVATION OF A RELIGION

In earlier chapters the question of the nature of religion was approached from the standpoint of the interested and sympathetic but detached spectator—detached, at least for the time being and for the purposes of the inquiry, from such particular religious beliefs and habits as he may himself privately harbor. The task of a spectator philosophical in this sense is to discover a conception of religion both comprehensive enough to apply to all the known religions and specific enough to exclude any institutions or types of human experience that admittedly are not religious. The conception we offered as satisfying these requirements was framed in terms of certain social and certain personal functions, which there is no need to describe again at this point. To perform them, it was maintained, is the task peculiar to religion; or, conversely, religion is that human institution whose distinctive task is to perform those functions. How well or ill the historical religions have actually performed them for particular societies or particular individuals is of course another question.

But that the definition of religion proposed was framed in functional terms must not be taken to imply that in the view of the adherent of a religion his religion is something that exists solely or essentially in order to perform the functions mentioned. He may well believe or find that it does perform them, more or less well; but from his standpoint this is likely to be considered a by-product, an incidental value of his religion, rather than its essence. Generally, he would find it difficult to define that essence, but, for him *qua* devotee, his religion is not something to be objectively observed, compared, analyzed and defined; rather, it is something to be believed, relied upon, participated in, and obeyed as well as he can.

In this chapter, we shall consider how persons acquire such religion as they have; also, certain of the experiences frequently connected with later developments in the individual's religious history; the differences of temperament and of conditioning, and the external circumstances, on which these experiences appear to depend; and the means available to the individual for cultivation of his religion. In the next chapter, certain additional religious practices and experiences will be discussed.

## Religion in Childhood

When and how does the individual ordinarily acquire his religion, and what is likely to be its first form? Various writers on the philosophy of religion have asserted that a religion is essentially a social artifact, gradually elaborated through many generations, and hence that no individual can create a religion for himself. We have earlier had occasion to question the absoluteness of this assertion. The truth would seem to be only that creation by an individual of a religion for himself is rare; and this because he is almost always offered some ready-made one by the society in which he is reared, and because it is psychologically easy for him to absorb it, whereas rejecting it and originating one for himself would be difficult. We may answer our first question, then, by saying that, with but rare and unimportant exceptions, human beings acquire their particular religion from their early environment. In most cases, they "catch" it, like their measles, their table manners, and their mother-tongue, automatically at an early age. The transmission is effected mainly by suggestion, which, as will be remembered, was defined earlier as introduction of an idea into the mind in such a manner or under such circumstances that no critical examination of it is made, so that it is accepted automatically. An apparatus of critical examination consists of some set of accepted beliefs, together with capacity to perceive the logical compatibility or incompatibility of new ideas with the already accepted ones. The young child has not yet acquired such an apparatus and is therefore extremely suggestible. We have already quoted on this point Pratt's remark that "implicit belief, the unquestioning acceptance of the presented, is the natural reaction of the virgin mind." [1] We must now point out the chief ways in which suggestion operates to install a religion—a set of religious beliefs and habits—in the child's mind long before occasions to use it arise.

One of these ways is imitation, whether spontaneous or enjoined, of overt religious acts performed by the child's parents in his presence—for example, keeping silent and bowing the head when grace is being said before meals, kneeling during family prayers, going to church, and, in church, imitating the variety of acts performed by the congregation.

The child's spontaneous impulse to imitate behavior that arrests his attention is manifest in the instance of the urchin who, on noticing a pompous man walking on the street, gets in step behind him, aping his gait and carriage; or, when a parade is in progress, struts at the side imagining himself as drum major and mimicking the latter's performance. The adult notices the same natural tendency in himself when, watching a tug-of-war, he catches himself leaning and straining in the direction of the effort of the team on which sympathy centers his attention.

In the case of religious acts witnessed by the child, the same impulse operates, and, because the religious observances he witnesses recur again and again, the impulse to imitate them becomes "conditioned" to the types of contexts in which they took place; i.e., the impulse becomes habitual to the child in those contexts. Moreover, the tendency to spontaneous imitation does not operate alone. The acts of observance are in addition verbally enjoined on the child, both by his parents and by the religious teachers who also instruct him.

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[1] J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), p. 99.

Certain religious concepts, as well as practices, also get lodged by suggestion in the child's mind. He repeatedly hears certain words—prominent among which is usually the word God—uttered in connection with the religious observances and with certain attitudes and modes of conduct approved and enjoined or, as the case may be, condemned and forbidden; and this automatically builds up in his mind the idea of a source of commands and prohibitions and of benefits and chastisements, other and greater than the source his parents themselves constitute, yet, like them, personal. That the idea of a God or gods is thus an extension of the observed role of his parents in relation to him, to wit, that of providers, protectors, and rulers—much rather than that of begetters, of which he knows nothing—accounts for the fact that theism, which is the most ingenuous form of religious theory, is also the most widespread.

In addition to the automatic psychological factors already mentioned, another and more purposive one operates, namely, the statements made by parents and religious teachers as to the meanings of and the reasons for the religious acts; and as to the meaning of the words God, Devil, Soul, Heaven, Hell, Salvation, Damnation, Redemption, or others specific to the theology or mythology of the parents' particular religion. In childhood, the capacity for abstract concepts is still rudimentary, and ideas of what such words mean therefore have to be framed in concrete and dramatic terms—such as those in which mostly are written the scriptures of the various religions. Indeed, the parents' and other lay teachers' own ideas of what "God" and the rest of the key words in their religious vocabulary signify are usually either very vague, or else are only the dramatic, overconcrete and reflectively implausible ones of the myths of the particular religion. As Pratt emphasizes, the technical subtleties of the theologians' definitions of those key words make very little contribution to the ordinary layman's working idea of what "God" and those other terms mean; and, it goes without saying, those definitions make even less of a contribution to the child's idea of it. He accepts unquestioningly and literally what he is told about it and about the events related in the scriptures. The writer, for instance, remembers hearing his mother read to him, before he had himself learned to read, the passage of Genesis (3:7) which, in the French version she used, contains the words: "*Et les yeux de tous deux furent ouverts*," i.e., "And the eyes of them both were opened." But because in French the terminal "*t*" in "*furent*" is pronounced when the next word begins with a vowel, he took the statement to be: "*Et les yeux de tous deux furent tout verts*," i.e., "And the eyes of them both became all green!" This he accepted quite as naïvely and fully as he did the stories of Adam's rib, of the talking serpent, and the rest. Only that surprises and arouses doubt in us, which is at variance with expectations created in us by previous information or experience. When we have as yet none or little of either, anything seems to us as plausible as anything else.

During childhood, curiosity develops as to many matters which the child cannot observe for himself—among others, matters of origins and of causation; and the picturesque accounts of these contained in the sacred writings of the religion of his parents furnish him with theological ideas which he adopts as readily and lightly as he does an idea of what the Devil is like from the picture on a can of deviled ham. These ideas are functional in him only in that, for the time being, they satisfy his curiosity as to origins, as to the causes of various otherwise unexplained events, and as to why he should behave in certain ways. But they hardly function in the sense of inducing in the child what we shall farther on term "religiousness." Childhood, considered psychologically rather than physiologically, is reckoned by Starbuck as extending from about the age of three to that of ten or eleven, and he puts the features of it to which we have referred by saying that "one of the most pronounced characteristics of the religion of childhood . . . is that *religion is distinctively external to the child rather than something which possesses inner significance.*" With some exceptions, it is during adolescence that religion "becomes gradually transformed from its distinctive character as external observance to a life that is lived from within." [2]

## Religion in Adolescence

The period of human life termed adolescence is taken by Starbuck to extend from the end of childhood to as late as 24 or 25. Considerable room for variations must be allowed as between different individuals, different races, and different cultures, and as between boys and girls.

During adolescence, a number of novel factors, subjective and objective, come into play in the life of the individual. They give rise both to problems and to opportunities that were not present in childhood; and the process of learning to solve problems and to avail one's self of opportunities is one of personal growth, which eventuates in achievement of a more or less firm and self-chosen self, as contrasted with the part natural and part externally imposed self of childhood. What happens to the religious consciousness during that period has emotional, intellectual, and moral phases. The changes may be gradual and, although with some high spots, relatively uneventful; or on the contrary they may be marked by great stresses and by climactic experiences such as that of conviction of sinfulness, conversion, consciousness of being "saved," and so on.

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[2] E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 194.

Among the novel factors which emerge during adolescence, that of sexual maturation is important. It means that novel feelings, interests and impulses, related to persons of the opposite sex and generally strong, manifest themselves and upset the psychological economy that had been established during childhood. The impulses connected with sex, moreover, at once find themselves confronted by the forms and taboos which the individual's social group has imposed on the expression of those impulses. The reasons given the adolescent for these sex restrictions usually trace them to the authority of his religion rather than to considerations that would appeal to his intelligence and judgment. The result of this is that some of the prohibitions, for example, by some sects, of dancing, may appear to him arbitrary—a three-cornered conflict thus being generated between his natural impulses, his religion, and his reason. This situation is made the more acute when there are added to the list other prohibitions—for instance, of card-playing, theater-going, smoking, or of even the most moderate use of mild alcoholic beverages—which commonsense sees as ordinarily harmless pleasures.

Again, during adolescence the relations of the boy or girl with other persons generally alter in the direction of greater independence of control, or even of supervision and advice, by parents. The youth is less constantly at home than the child; and in school, or on such part-time or vacation jobs as he or she may have, he makes acquaintances of his own, of whom his family has little chance to approve or disapprove. The manners, moral standards and religious beliefs of these acquaintances are often very different from those to which he is accustomed. The latter, under the impact of the difference, may come to be viewed by him with less assurance than before of their absolute validity, or perhaps even as antiquated or provincial; and such degree of economic self-dependence as the adolescent may acquire will tend to foster in him confidence in his capacity to make his own decisions. At the same time, his education enlarges his intellectual horizon, furnishing him with facts, points of view, opinions, and evaluations which, added to his growing stock of personal experience, increasingly build up in him a fund of firm ideas of his own. As this goes on, he gets better and better equipped to examine critically both any new ideas presented to him and the old ideas lodged in his mind by suggestion during childhood—now rejecting or accepting, according to the consistency or inconsistency of the idea examined with his own firming intellectual commitments.

All these factors, together with the increasing personal responsibility which automatically goes with increasing independence, and the grave social obligations which he may now be assuming or which events may thrust upon him, are very likely to create for him problems which only a deep and living religiousness could enable him to meet with equanimity. But at the same time, the religious beliefs and habits lodged in him during childhood, which are now important to him because they now would have occasion to perform for him the personal functions of religion, i.e., to generate the religious attitude toward personal difficulties and outer duties, are likely to be seen by him as open to serious question or even as patently indefensible.

The inner and outer conflicts inherent in this general state of affairs inevitably have effects on the adolescent's religion, and on his behavior, his emotions, and his ideas of right and wrong in so far as all these had been based on his religion. Those effects, of course, will vary greatly with the nature of the religious beliefs which had been implanted in him. Nonoccurrence of the experience called "conversion," for example, will have a very different effect on young people, according as they have been taught to regard it as essential and to desire and expect it; or, on the contrary, as they have been told nothing about it and therefore do not expect it. The more rigid, arbitrary, and numerous are the religious beliefs inculcated in childhood and still enjoined on the adolescent by parents or church, the more violent will be the psychological strains and the resulting pains and bewilderment when doubts of those beliefs intrude themselves.

Starbuck describes a number of religious phenomena typical of adolescence. His account is based on reports by numbers of men and women as to their personal experiences during that period of their own lives. All his respondents, however, seem to have been reared in an environment where not only monotheism, but more specifically Christianity was the prevailing religion; and, indeed, in the case of most of them, Christianity in some one of its Protestant forms rather than in the Roman Catholic. But even within so highly selected a sample, no single pattern of religious development during adolescence prevails. The most which Starbuck finds it possible to say is that "the common trend of religious growth is from childhood faith, through doubt, reaction and estrangement, into a positive hold on religion, through an individual reconstruction of belief and faith." [3]

One normal kind of adolescent experience, however, is that called "religious awakening." On the whole, it is perhaps best described as a taking personal possession of the religious beliefs and habits which were pliantly admitted into the mind during childhood. They are now appropriated—they become clear commitments of one's own. Their truth and validity is intensely felt instead of as before passively accepted on authority. This awakening may be spontaneous, as an aspect of the growth of individual responsibility consequent on growing independence; or it may be sparked by some novel and emotionally potent event, such perhaps as the death of a parent or sibling, or the solemnity of the preparations for the first communion.

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

Another frequent feature of the religious life of the adolescent is the alternation of the religious fervor attained in the awakening—when religion is something vivid and earnestly cultivated—with periods during which it becomes pallid and is neglected, or observance of its duties only perfunctory.

Again, in many individuals, there are times of what has come to be labeled "storm and stress," resulting from concomitance of the religious awakening just mentioned with an inner conviction of sinfulness—of failure and of profound incapacity to live up to what one's now vivid religious commitments demand. This easily generates a tormenting fear of damnation and hence of death; or it may lead chiefly to depression, brooding, and endless self-examination.

Again, doubt, due to the causes already mentioned, of the truth of the religious beliefs which the awakening has made really significant, is very common in adolescence. It tends to alienate the youth from persons who are intolerant of such doubts or who are merely not troubled by them; and this leads him to the seclusiveness which, as will be recalled, H. R. Marshall regarded as one of the manifestations of the religious instinct he postulated. But when, eventually, the doubts have been resolved in a manner the individual finds satisfactory, then a proselytizing phase may supervene, in which he seeks to communicate to others the particular form of faith to which he has arrived—or, it may be, the hard-won skepticism in the freedom of which he now rejoices.

But except in the case of the few persons who then make religious reform their career or their hobby, the demands made upon a person's time, thought, and energy by the tasks of adult life usually mean that such religion as he has arrived at is henceforth something to be resorted to and practiced as well as he can, rather than something to be further reflected upon. In some, it remains living and influential through the years; in others, the observances it calls for come to be complied with only perfunctorily or to be neglected altogether, the beliefs lose the plausibility they once had, and interest in religion virtually lapses.

## Conversion

In what precedes, only passing allusion was made to the experience called "conversion." The term is currently used in a variety of senses, the most frequent of which is probably that of transferring one's allegiance from one religion to another, as for instance when one speaks of converting the adherents of some pagan religion to Christianity. But as referring to a religious phenomenon typical of adolescence, though occurring sometimes in later years, the term denotes generically the religious "awakening" mentioned in the preceding section, and more specifically this awakening when, instead of occurring gradually as is the normal case, it occurs as the climax of a crisis.

The latter type, although more or less abnormal and artificially induced, is what the evangelical churches specifically mean by conversion. Their assumption is that man is naturally and profoundly sinful; that he cannot possibly live up to the laws laid down by God; and that the spiritual regeneration for which he longs cannot come to him by his own efforts but only by the grace of God. To deserve it, he must pray for it in all humility, freely acknowledging himself a miserable sinner, born in corruption, inclined to evil, and incapable by himself of doing the good. If and when the divine grace comes, it manifests itself in an unmistakable and joyous feeling that he is saved and that God loves him, which suddenly pervades him and replaces the wretchedness and despair of his previous consciousness of sin.

Pratt, whose discussion of conversion is illuminating, rightly contends that the religious awakening which is a characteristic feature of adolescence is indeed a conversion in the sense of a change in the values regarded as basic or central; that this change is sometimes startlingly sudden, but that it is normally rather gradual, although with moments high in feeling and in novelty of insight; and that conversion of the crisis type usually means only that persons in whom a conviction of sinfulness and a hope of conversion, conceived as described above, have been worked up, single out some particular one of those high religious moments and take it to be *the* conversion experience they desired and expected.

To see religious conversion, whether gradual or sudden, in proper perspective, one must realize that there are conversions of kinds other than the religious. For one, there are instances of "counterconversion"—of conversion *away from* religion and to purely secular conceptions of the nature and origins of the universe and of the nature, duties, and destiny of man. As a striking instance of this, Pratt describes the case of Roberto Ardigo, a Catholic priest who had long struggled against religious doubts and who believed himself to have finally conquered them, but who one day suddenly found himself a convinced Positivist, with all his previous religious beliefs gone. "Up to that day," Ardigo declares, "I had devoted myself to the effort to remain firm in my old religious beliefs, and yet, within me, and without my knowing it, the Positivist system had become freely developed in the midst of the system of religious ideas which was the fruit of an effort so great and so protracted. The new system I found, to my very great amazement, already complete, and unshakably settled in my mind." [4]

The case of Ardigo is of especial interest not only as an instance of conversion away from instead of to religion, but also as showing that, in conversions of the sudden type, a great deal of subconscious cogitation has preceded, at least in some instances. This assimilates sudden religious conversions, whether of the sought or the spontaneous kinds, and also counterconversions, to the remarkable cases in which some novel and profound scientific insight suddenly enters the mind, seemingly from outside; also, to the instances of sudden change of philosophical position, of political conviction, or of ruling interests.

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[4] Quoted by Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 127. This book, to which the present and the next chapter owe a great deal, is the most readable, most illuminating, and best balanced discussion of the psychology of the various aspects of the religious consciousness known to the present writer. Anyone interested in the subject is urged to read it in its entirety.

As an example of the first, Starbuck quotes Sir William Rowan Hamilton's own words as to the irruption into his mind of the fundamental equations embodying his discovery of quaternions, while walking in the country with Lady Hamilton.[5] Henri Poincaré's account of the insights which came to him at quite unexpected moments in connection with his investigation of fuchsian functions is often mentioned also, to illustrate the large role played by subconscious processes in such matters.[6] The present writer, during his days as a graduate student, experienced a startlingly sudden philosophical conversion.[7] James describes the religious counterconversion of the French philosopher Jouffroy; the very secular conversion of a young spendthrift to miserliness; and he mentions other kinds of more or less abrupt change in the basic values of a person's life—for example that which occurs in the experience of falling in love.[8] Religious conversion, even when sudden and apparently undergone passively rather than achieved, thus seems to be only the religious species of a kind of psychological phenomenon which has also a wide diversity of nonreligious varieties.

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[5] Starbuck, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

[6] For a summary of Poincaré's account, see R. D. Carmichael, *The Logic of Discovery* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1930), pp. 211–13. Also, p. 209 for reports by other mathematicians evidencing the part of subconscious activity in mathematical discovery.

[7] An account of the occurrence may be found in C. J. Ducasse, and others, *Contemporary American Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), Vol. I, pp. 304-5.

[8] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1929), pp. 176–79.

The supposition of divine agency in religious conversions, even when these are of the crisis type, is not necessary to explain them. The psychological processes and conditions upon which their occurrence depends are fairly well understood. Coe examined 77 persons, nearly all of them college students, a large majority of whom had been brought up under the influence of the Methodist Church, which lays stress on experiences such as conversion. But some of them had been taught that if one has been religious from childhood, he does not need a marked conversion; and some others had never given much thought to conversion. Confining then his scrutiny to those who had desired and expected a notable conversion experience, Coe compared, in respect to temperament and suggestibility, those who had obtained it and those who had not. His investigation brought out three factors as favorable to the occurrence of a striking religious transformation: (1) desire for and expectation of it; (2) a temperament in which sensibility predominates over intellect or will, and which is of the so-called "sanguine" or of the "melancholic" type, rather than of the "choleric" or the "phlegmatic"; and (3) passive suggestibility (i.e., ready acceptance, under partial hypnosis, of the suggestions given, instead of efforts to reject them), together with tendency to automatisms, e.g., hallucinations, striking dreams, visions, uncontrollable laughter when excited, etc. Coe found that of 10 persons in whom all three of these conditions were met, 9 obtained the conversion expected; whereas of 11 persons who desired and expected it, but in whom intellect predominated over sensibility or will, and who, instead of being passively suggestible, had capacity for spontaneous auto-suggestion, not a single one obtained the conversion experience.[9]

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[9] G. A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900), chap. iii.

Occurrence of the experience, then, is explicable as brought about in passively suggestible persons of the stated temperament by the suggestions contained in the kind of theological indoctrination we described, together with, in the case of conversions occurring at revivals, the reinforcement provided by the emotional excitement skilfully worked up at these affairs, and the enhancement of suggestibility resulting from the crowd situation and from the acts and words of other persons there and then undergoing conversion. Conversions thus chiefly induced by elaborately staged psychological pressures tend not to endure.[10] Indeed, even in those which occur under less spectacular outer circumstances, the emotional intensity of the climax can hardly be maintained long, and the memory of it sometimes gives rise to futile and painful endeavors to recapture it. Coe cites the case of a man who was converted at the age of sixteen: "His whole being was thrilled with joy, and he had what he regarded as the witness of the Spirit. But from seventeen to nineteen he endured terrible storm and stress in which he sought in vain to recover his original status. He finally settled down to the conviction that we are children of God in our deeds and thoughts rather than in our particular moods and feelings." [11]

### Religiousness and Its Relations to Religious Beliefs and Practices

The notion of "religious awakening," which is so widely used by writers on the psychology of religion in adolescence, turns out to be a very elastic one. As we characterized it earlier in the present chapter, it is an evolution of, or a revolution in, the religion of childhood; and the form the awakening takes in a particular individual has much to do with what the particular religious beliefs and practices of his childhood happen to have been.

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[10] On the subject of revivals, see F. M. Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1905), especially chaps. xi, xii, xiii.

[11] Coe, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

The beliefs and practices of a religion, we shall call a religious apparatus or equipment. For the child, it has in general much of the same status as fairy tales and games. It is largely something to play at, even if, because of the seriousness with which parents take it, it may occupy a special place among the child's imaginings and make-believes. Sometimes, indeed, as a late colleague of the writer's reported of his own childhood, he enacts in the game the part of the priest, instead of, as commonly, that of the devotee.

In the case of children that have been equipped with a religious apparatus, the "religious awakening" of the time of adolescence seems to consist, at least in part, and sometimes chiefly or wholly, in an awakening of interest in the apparatus itself. It is no longer something to play with, but now something whose constituents are to be scrutinized and assayed. The question of their truth or falsity, which hardly arose as long as they had much the same status as that of fairy tales, now does arise and assumes great importance because of its perceived bearings on the conduct of the life of a now responsible person. The conversion which occurs—if it is conversion rather than counterconversion—may, whether gradual or sudden, consist essentially in the reaching of a firm conviction that the basic tenets of the religion concerned are true; in the resolution therefore to conform one's conduct to the religion's precepts; and in the welcome feeling that his relation to the determiner of destiny is now what it should be.

But conversion can consist of both more and less than this: of less, in that it may occur without pre-existence in the individual of any religious apparatus, in the status of which it would, as above, be a change—and even without adoption then of such an apparatus; and of more, in that the conversion may consist in the advent of what we shall call "religiousness" or the religious attitude, which is something more intimate than the change described above, and which, even when such change occurs, does not always follow from it. An attempt will now be made to indicate more explicitly what is here meant by religiousness or the religious attitude.

One summer day long ago, the writer was lying in the grass observing some of the many things which go on there but remain invisible from the lofty regions where men's eyes normally dwell. Near him was a flat stone, perhaps of the size of the hand, on which as he looked a small spider ran, apparently intent on crossing it. The writer plucked a blade of grass and, as the spider was about to get off, he gently pushed it back. The spider then busily started in a different direction, which, however, the blade of grass eventually blocked again. This double manoeuvre was repeated two or three times. Then, however, the spider's strategy changed radically; it curled itself up in a little motionless ball, virtually saying: "Not my will, but thine, be done!"

Thereby its problem was solved, for a problem is always a conflict between what one desires and what the facts at the moment are or permit, and, as pointed out in an earlier chapter, such a conflict is theoretically terminable in either of two ways: One—that of self-reliance—consists in exertion by the individual of his powers, thereby so altering the existing objective situation that it eventually becomes what he wished it to be. This is the way advocated as sensible by La Fontaine in one of his Fables. He there describes a rustic whose cart is so deeply mired that the horse cannot move it, and who then calls for aid upon Hercules. The latter answers: "Dig out that mud . . . take thy pick and break this rock which is in thy way . . . fill that rut. Aid thyself and Heaven will aid thee." [12] The other way is to make the adjustment at the subjective instead of at the objective pole of the situation—to resign one's will, or at least alter it to conform to what may be possible: "Require not things to happen as you wish," says Epictetus, "but wish them to happen as they do happen, and you will go on well." [13]

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[12] Jean de La Fontaine, "Le Chartier Embourbé," *Fables* (Paris: 1668), Bk. VI, Fable XVIII.

The first of these two ways of solving one's problems is suited to moments and situations where one has or can get the power, the knowledge, or the instruments needed to bend circumstances to his will. The other is appropriate to the occasions where, on the contrary, one finds himself too weak, ignorant, or ill-equipped to make things conform to his will. This humble way is the religious way; or at least, it is this when the values in jeopardy are values felt as momentous.

The reflective person, however, soon perceives that no matter how strong, clever, and well-equipped he may be, there are always limits to what he can compel. The success or failure of his undertakings always depends in part on factors which he cannot anticipate or cannot control. The outcome of even his best efforts is always ultimately "on the knees of the gods"—at the mercy of accidents, dependent to some extent on good or bad "luck." Recognition by man that his values are always dependent on some external "determiner of destiny," whether conceived somehow as natural or as supernatural, brings home to him the fact that a measure of humility and of readiness for resignation, as well as a measure of self-reliance and of pertinacity, is always fitting.

But mere cessation of overt struggle in defeat, mere passive endurance of something that cannot be altered—while one yet longs for the values in the way of which that thing stands—does not bring inner peace. For this, not resignation only but reconciliation is required; and it comes only when positive values hitherto unfamiliar or ignored—and not solely negation of the familiar ones—are discerned in the frustrating situation or at least are fervently believed to be latent there. There is truly reconciliation to one's fate only when he perceives or firmly believes that the shutting in his face of the door to his cherished values has automatically opened or at least unlocked certain other doors; and that these lead to ranges of values which, although different from those he sought, are nonetheless positive and possibly as great or greater. Religiousness, we may therefore say, or more specifically *private religiousness*, is the attitude of mind which loosens enough one's attachment to the values he habitually pursues to enable him to perceive, or at least to believe in, the existence and accessibility to him of values of other kinds, which that pursuit was automatically sacrificing unawares—that attitude of mind, moreover, making this discernment possible not alone, consolingly, in times of frustration, but also, and then soberingly, in times of success.

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[13] *Encheiridion*, VIII. In *The Moral Discourses of Epictetus*, trans. Elizabeth Carter (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1909), Vol. II.

When need arises for private or personal religiousness as so defined, this, if obtained, may come from one's religion. But in a person who has no religion, it may come as a psychologically natural reaction to situations of certain kinds. For instance, what awakens it may be sudden initiation into an until then unrecognized kind of positive values, through adventitious contact with some person whose life is being lived serenely in terms of them and without those we ourselves hold dear. Thereby, our until then passionate attachment to the latter is relaxed, and we are made ready to let them pass with some degree of equanimity if they should pass, and to embrace the others. Or again, what awakens the religious attitude in a person who has no religion may be the mere pressure to escape from crushing frustration, or perhaps from anxious awareness that his good fortune is unearned and insecure. But, irrespective of the nature of the awakening occasion, such a person is then likely to invent or adopt some form of faith, whether supernaturalistic or naturalistic, that rationalizes and sanctions the attained religious attitude.

In the majority of persons, however, the converse of this process is what occurs. That is, having been brought up in some religion, they find themselves equipped already with certain religious beliefs and habits, which perhaps have remained mostly verbal and perfunctory because the momentously frustrating or other kinds of situations apt to render them significant have not yet presented themselves. But when these suddenly occur, then the religion of such persons does, or may, become functional. That is, it may then dictate and induce in them the religious attitude; whereas in the case of the religionless persons first considered it was the already attained attitude which then demanded religious beliefs of some sort, wherewith to rationalize and sanction the attained religiousness.

In either case, that attitude, when present, is what brings the inner peace, the serenity independent of ill fortune or good, which, we have contended, it is the personal function of religion to produce. It is the kind of attitude which, in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna describes in the words: "Alike to foe and friend, and also in fame and ignominy, alike in cold and heat, pleasures and pains, destitute of attachment, taking equally praise and reproach, silent, wholly content with what cometh . . ."[14] It is the same attitude which the believer in a God has when he finds himself able to say and *really desire* that "not my will but thine, O Lord, be done."

We have called this attitude *private or personal religiousness;* but there is also—corresponding to the social function of religion—what we shall term *social religiousness.* This consists of *inclination*—disposition, inner impulse—to behave toward one's fellow beings justly and altruistically; as contrasted with so behaving, but grudgingly, reluctantly, only as onerous duty imposed by one's religion. Social religiousness as so conceived is more often spontaneous, and also more often a fruit of a person's religious beliefs, than is private religiousness as we defined it: The serene man, inwardly at peace in the ups and downs of life, is rarer than the honest and generous "good neighbor." But being the latter paves the way, at least, to becoming the former.

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[14] Discourse 12, Verses 18, 19.

Even when a person's religious beliefs are strong, however, and his religious observances faithful, religiousness of either the private or the social kind does not always flow from them, or, when it does, flow abundantly. Often, and especially by more or less primitive persons, religious practices—both those of the cult, such as prayers, sacrifices, partaking of sacraments; and those relating to one's behavior towards his fellows, such as charity, honesty, truthfulness, and so on—are thought of by the individual largely as ways of getting by supernatural help things he would be unable to get by his own powers here or hereafter. To the extent that this is his attitude, he is not religious in the sense we have defined, no matter how seriously he may be taking his religion. What it then brings him, so long as he believes in the efficacy of its practices for his purpose, is not serenity independent of fortune, but only agreeable confidence that his fortune will continue to be good or will become so; nor the lightness of heart of the spontaneously honest and kind person who, because he is friendly to all, feels himself always among friends, but only motivation for behaving righteously, and, having done so, the rigid hope that the gods will not welsh on payment of the reward due him for obedience to their commands.

## Religious Cult

The word "cult" is derived from the Latin *colere*, which means to cultivate, to foster, i.e., to act in manners favorable to the subsistence and growth of something. The cult of a religion therefore consists of the rites, ceremonies, and practices conceived by its adherents to foster right relations between themselves and such divine or other external determiners of destiny as they believe in. This implies that the cult is conceived to be effective in one or the other or both of two ways: one, by influencing favorably the gods, demons, or other mysterious external forces on which depends the fate of whatever man values; and the other, by stimulating periodically, and thus keeping alive and functional in a man, the beliefs, attitudes, feelings, ideals, and dispositions to virtuous conduct prescribed by his particular religion.

The first of these two kinds of effects is the one directly aimed at in such forms of worship as prayers, sacrifices, songs of praise or gratitude, invocations; the second, in ceremonies symbolically representing in dramatic form some of the basic beliefs of the theology or the mythology of the given religion; also, in sermons, in readings from the sacred books, in recitals of creed, in meditations, ascetic practices, confessions of sins, and so on.

As in the case of conversion, so in that of the cult it is well to notice that one has to do with something which is found also outside of religion. That is, various engrossing human interests other than the religious also have their forms of cult. Political parades, Fourth-of-July celebrations, Victory-Day exercises, Commencement exercises, initiations into secret societies, football rallies, ship launchings, Presidential inaugurations, and the like, are other manifestations of man's impulse to give dramatic vicarious expression by more or less symbolic acts to shared strong emotions and wishes; and are evidences of man's capacity to have these aroused or vivified in him by attendance at or participation in such ceremonies. The psychology of the impulses to, and of the effects of, these secular celebrations is essentially the same as in the case of the religious ceremonies. These, however, have in general more elaborate, numerous and fixed forms. Religious ceremonies are, some of them at least, repeated at more frequent regular intervals; they are more prone to avail themselves of aesthetic aids for arousal of the desired moods; and they are believed by those who take part in them to be concerned with matters of ultimately greater importance than those in view in any of the secular ceremonies.

The frequency, multiplicity, and regularity of the observances enjoined by a religion are important factors in its psychological hold on its adherents. Montesquieu, in the second chapter of the twenty-fifth book of his famous *Esprit des Lois*, discusses the variety of factors that tend to attach men to their religions. He mentions among others the importance in the cult of presence of objects perceptible to the senses; of the belief that one's religion is the only true one; of magnificence of the ceremonial; and also the factor to which we have just alluded, saying that "a religion enjoining many observances binds men to it more than a religion that enjoins fewer; one gets much attached to things at which he is continually busy."

Montesquieu's reference to the psychological effectiveness, for the purposes of the cult, of making use in it of objects perceptible to the senses is of particular interest in connection with fetishism, idolatry, and the physical aspects of the cult. In the great majority of human beings, the capacity for naked abstract thought is very limited. To generate feelings and attitudes, and to motivate action, ideas commonly have to take on the vestment of images, visual, auditory, and other; or, still better, the form of visible and tangible objects. The psychological soundness of the principle that seeing is believing, and indeed, that seeing is believing even what one does not see, has many illustrations. Near Durham in England, a hill with nine terraces is pointed at by local peasants as concrete evidence of the one-time presence there of the Lambton Worm—"a diabolical big snake with nine ferocious eyes," said to have been in the habit of coiling itself around it with nine heavy coils, until it was slain by Sir Lambton on his return from the crusades. He clad himself in a special armor, all over which large razor blades were fixed. When the worm coiled himself around him, it cut itself to pieces![15] Were such an armor preserved in Durham Castle, it would doubtless be pointed at by the same peasants, like the hill, as visible and tangible proof of the reality of the whole affair.

The attitude of worshipers toward carved or painted images of gods, saints, or demons, and toward other physical objects assumed connected with these in one way or another, varies greatly from one religion to another, and from unintelligent to intelligent persons within the same religion. At the more primitive levels, the carved image is taken to be the god himself; at a higher level it is viewed as only a representation of the god, who may come to inhabit it at the moment a prayer or sacrifice is offered. At a still higher level, the image is conceived as merely a symbol of the god, to which, however, are psychologically tacked all the beliefs, emotions, and attitudes relative to the god. The symbol arouses these just as the flag of the country, or the strains of the national anthem, arouse patriotic feelings; and just as a particular perfume, or a keepsake, or a photograph of a dead friend, brings vividly to mind the whole chapter of one's past relationship with the person concerned. Indeed, not only the tangible objects figuring in the cult but, as pointed out before, the very word "God," and for Christians, the words "Jesus Christ" and certain others, have the same potent psychological magic. "Idolatry" is thus a highly ambiguous term. It is applied, by those who in their cult use images but take them only as symbols, to those who in a different or perhaps in the very same cult, take the images more literally as being the god himself or as objects in which he comes to dwell. Indeed, the very persons who scorn and denounce "idolatry" often regard the church, or a particular place in the church, or a particular object there, as something in which God particularly resides.

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[15] M. D. Conway, *Demonology and Devil Lore* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1879), Vol. I, pp. 411–13.

But whether the images are taken by the devotee literally or only symbolically, their physical character—their presence to the senses—functions psychologically in essentially the same important manner. Thus, as Pratt remarks at the end of his discussion of idolatry, "much more may . . . be said in defense of the practice of 'idolatry' than most of us have been brought up to suppose. It is based upon a perfectly sound psychological principle, and it appeals to a widely felt human need; and it is this fact that has given it so wide-spread and enthusiastic adoption through so many centuries."[16]

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[16] Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

## Chapter 13

# PRAYER

In the religious parts of the lives of the majority of persons that have a religion, prayer plays a prominent role. At various places in earlier chapters, incidental references to prayer have been made, but the point has now been reached at which we must consider systematically the essential nature of it; the variety of forms it takes; the diversity of desiderata prayed for; the question whether prayer ever is really efficacious, and if so, for the obtaining of what kinds of desiderata; and finally, what possible explanations suggest themselves of such efficacy as it has.

### The Psychological Origin of Prayer

In connection with the impersonal form of the ritualistic prayer of the Todas, we suggested that, psychologically considered, prayer is but one particular manifestation of man's general impulse to express vocally, like many other animals but in his case often articulately, the more intense sudden feelings and wishes. Groans of pain, sighs of relief, snarls of rage, exclamations of joy or sorrow, cries of alarm, and so on, are examples of inarticulate manifestations of that impulse. At the articulate level, on the other hand, some of the most patent and common examples of vocal expression of feelings and wishes would be oaths and curses, and likewise the ordinary expressions of wishes for the good health, or restful sleep, or prosperity, or long life, or safe journey, etc., of someone.

Equally in the case of good and of ill wishes, their verbal expressions are in most cases as impersonal in form as is the

Toda prayer. But even when the name of God or of the Devil appears in the wording used—"May God keep you," "The Devil take him," etc.—the expression is usually not thought of by the utterer as a petition to a supernatural being. He merely employs, in order to express his wish vocally, a stereotyped form of words that happens to be current among the persons from whom he has picked up his native tongue. This is especially evident in the case of oaths and curses; originally and essentially, they are not requests addressed to God or the Devil for destruction of the cursed object, but simply verbal explosions of anger and ill will analogous, even if articulate, to the provoked animal's growl of rage.

## Gods and Demons as Postulated Granters of Prayers

The supposition that some invisible being hears the prayer, understands it, and acts to give it effect is in all probability originally not anterior but posterior to the spontaneous explosion of the wish into speech. In instances where such expression of the wish seems to have been effective in fulfilling it, men easily suppose that, since the expression of the wish was verbal, the medium of its efficacy, which was not visible, must—as in the everyday cases where the medium of efficacy of words is seen to be a man—have been a likewise conscious and volitient being, but then an invisible one—a god if the prayer appears to bring one the benefit asked for, but a devil if the prayer was by another person for something disastrous to one's self. Of course, once the idea that such beings exist has occurred and been adopted, some prayers come to be uttered that are no longer bare unaddressed articulations of wishes, but are then deliberately directed to the postulated invisible beings—with, perhaps, in order to lubricate their disposition to help, some sacrificial offering or song of praise.

It is instructive in this connection to notice how, in situations where one man acutely needs the help of other men, the supposition he makes concerning their particular nature and their relations to him shapes the vocal expression of his state of consciousness. Imagine, for example, that a man alone in the wilderness breaks a leg. He may groan in pain, inarticulately; or he may gasp: "How that hurts!" But, unless in an irrational condition, he will not call out: "Help! help!" if he feels certain that no human being is within miles of him. If, on the other hand, he believes that there are men within hearing, the form of his calls on them for help will be dictated by his belief as to their language and his ability to speak it; and will be further modulated according to his belief as to their disposition—friendly, indifferent, or hostile; hopeful of reward, fearful of punishment, or amenable to flattery; and so on. Evidently, the kinds of factors that determine the shape given in this instance to the vocal expression of the needy consciousness are much the same when the beings addressed are not men perceived, but invisible superhuman beings imagined.

The needs of men, however, are not always for physical aid in sickness, danger, or enterprise, or for objects such as food, shelter, and the like. Sometimes what a man needs is a safe and understanding confidant to whom to confess acts that torment him with remorse or fear; or perhaps someone to love and be loved by, or to look up to and admire, or simply to be with rather than be alone and lonely; or again, someone capable of giving wise counsel and sympathy, and so on. Thus, besides prayers of petition, there are prayers of confession, of adoration, of aspiration, of devotion, of gratitude, of communion: To look *to* someone for satisfaction of such needs, or to look *for* someone that would satisfy them, is to "pray" to him, or that one may find him. It is genuinely prayer, no matter of what specific acts, verbal or other, the looking to or looking for may consist.

## Another Motive for Postulation of Gods and Demons

If, however, one fails to find the person one needs or he fails to respond, then—like the physicist who does not find but invents the invisible subatomic particles he needs for his purposes—one easily invents and postulates the existence of gods or other spirits that are invisible but have the dispositions relevant to one's emotional needs. And of course, the religious man's inventions may, like those of the physicist, correspond to realities; although, unlike the physicist, he is not able to demonstrate this by showing that they have predictive capacity.

Thus, besides the intellectual need, already considered, which invents invisible personal beings to account for the otherwise puzzling apparent efficacy of certain merely verbal expressions of wishes, we have here another source of man's invention of such beings: his unsatisfied emotional needs beget the idea of and belief in gods or other friendly spirits; and his unmerited afflictions, the idea of and belief in malevolent spirits and demons.

## Varieties of Prayerful Acts

The act in which man looks to his gods for the satisfaction of such emotional, material, or other needs as he cannot himself satisfy does not always take petitive or even verbal form, and even when it does so, the words employed need not be understood by the devotee. Probably not one Christian in a hundred knows that the expression "Hallelujah," which he utters in hymns again and again, means "Praise ye Yahweh." Indeed, man's address to his gods need not consist at all of words whether outwardly uttered or only inwardly. It may consist in the turning of a Tibetan prayer wheel, the ringing of a bell, or the beating of a drum; or simply in the assuming of a posture—kneeling, bowing the head, with hands joined;

or, as the case may be, standing, looking up to heaven, with arms outstretched; etc.—which, whether or not accompanied by utterance of perhaps stereotyped and sometimes cryptic vocables, is *meant* by the person performing the act as an expression of devotion, adoration, humility, or longing; or, it may be, as a petition for divine aid and protection in general rather than with reference to some particular difficulty. Indeed, that even *work*, of almost any kind, if done in a spirit of service to God or to whatever aims one may conceive as worthy of being termed divine, genuinely constitutes prayer—prayer of self-dedication—is the insight embodied in the old saying that *laborare est orare.* But in all these various forms of acts of prayer, the two elements already mentioned are alike to be discerned: One, some wish, feeling, or aspiration, whose inner pressure is strong enough to compel outer expression in some way; and the other, the outer expression the inner state receives, the form of which may be purely instinctive, but in man is commonly shaped by the linguistic conventions, or the nonlinguistic ritual customs, prevalent in the group to which the individual belongs; and further by his personal beliefs and specific needs.

## Are Prayers for External Results Efficacious?

By prayer for external results, we shall mean here prayer for results external to the body and the mind of the person who does the praying. Examples would be prayers for rain, for abundance of game, for victory in war, for protection from an epidemic or other external danger, for success in a business deal. Also, prayer for the healing or change of state of the mind or body, of another person who does *not* know he is being prayed for—prayer, for instance, that he will give up some bad habit, or develop some virtue he lacks, or be healed of some disease or injury.

Many persons among the more spiritually developed feel that it is inappropriate to pray for selfish gratifications—for example, to pray for winning in a lottery. Also, that prayers simply for luxuries, or for material things one desires but does not need, are not fitting. Such persons, if Christians, would in practice interpret the customary addition of the words "in the name of Jesus Christ" to the prayer not as a quasi-magical formula that can be depended upon to move God, but rather as meaning that the petition is made subject to the hope and belief that what it requests is consonant with the values sanctioned by Jesus.

Prayers for self, however, are not *eo ipso* selfish. They are selfish only when what is asked for is some benefit to one's self that would automatically mean loss or disadvantage to someone else. But prayers for one's own moral or intellectual improvement, or for one's own recovery from illness, are usually not in this case since the effects prayed for would generally tend to benefit not only one's self, but also others with whom one had to do.

Aside, however, from the question as to what desiderata may fittingly be prayed for, two others arise. One is that of the efficacy or inefficacy of prayer for external desiderata, or again, for internal improvements. And, if or when prayer is efficacious, the second question then is *how* the prayer operates —whether, as commonly assumed, indirectly, by enlisting supernatural interference with ordinary natural processes; or on the contrary, directly and of itself, in some natural way not yet understood.

There is little satisfactory evidence that prayer can cause effects on extrahuman processes in Nature, e.g., that it can cause or prevent rain, winds, or disaster from volcanic eruptions; or that it can cause effects on human beings unaware that they are being prayed for; or on human beings whose behavior will determine the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the external event prayed for, but who are unaware of this.

That an event of a stated kind was caused by a preceding event of another stated kind is in general not easy to prove, and, as scientists have learned through hard experience, it can be proved at all, in other than stereotyped instances, only if elaborate precautions are taken—the more elaborate, the greater is the number and elusiveness of the variable elements in the situation.

These elaborate precautions are seldom, if ever, taken by the devout, whose belief in the objective efficacy of prayer is essentially *a priori*, and whose *a posteriori* confirmations of that belief are in the vast majority of cases only of the naive, *post hoc ergo propter hoc* kind. Attempts which have been made to demonstrate experimentally the objective efficacy of prayer have either definitely failed to do this, or have been at best inconclusive. Patients in a hospital ward, who were prayed for unknown to themselves, have not improved notably more than those in a comparable other ward not prayed for; and even if one such experiment showed a positive result, many repetitions would be necessary to determine whether success is consistently more frequent than failure, and a causal relation therefore responsible for the successes, rather than mere chance.

### The Case of the Reverend George Müller

There is probably no well-attested case on record in which evidence that prayer can be objectively efficacious is at first sight more impressive than it is in the case of the Reverend George Müller's prayers. It is so interesting, and throws such light on the latent charitableness of men, even if not perhaps of God as assumed, and on what is effective in motivating it to express itself, that a short account of Müller's achievements and methods is worth inserting here.

Müller was born in Germany in 1805 and, until the age of about twenty, led a godless and profligate life. He then became religious, trusting more and more to prayer for guidance. Eventually, he went to England with the idea of being sent from there on missionary work; but instead he became pastor of a small church at Teignmouth. After a time, he began to have conscientious objections against receiving a stated salary and, in October, 1830, he told his congregation that hereafter he would depend only on such voluntary gifts as God might move anyone to make him. From that time on, he asked only God for what money he needed either for his own keep or for the philanthropic enterprises which he set afoot a few years later after his removal to Bristol. The first of these was an "Institution" dedicated to the following purposes: assisting day schools, Sunday schools, and adult schools in which it appeared that instruction was being given on scriptural principles; enabling poor children to attend such day schools; circulating the Scriptures; and aiding missionary efforts. All the expenses of this undertaking were supplied by spontaneous gifts, Müller soliciting only God for them. A little later, he founded a home for destitute orphans which came to harbor and educate over 700 of them at once, and which was financed entirely in the same manner.

Many years later, a man of means, not then known to Müller, but who knew of and admired the latter's philanthropic services, sent him a check for 100 pounds, to initiate a fund for the future maintenance of himself and his family. Müller, however, feeling that to make or accept any provision for his and his family's future would be to lack faith that God would always provide, declined to accept the gift if made for the purpose stated, saying: "Any gift given to me, unasked for, by those who have it in their heart to help me to supply my personal and family expenses, I thankfully accept; or any donation given to me for the work of God in which I am engaged, I also thankfully accept, as a steward for the orphans, etc.; but your kind gift seems to me especially given to *make a provision for myself,* which I think would be displeasing to my heavenly Father, who has so bountifully given me my daily bread hitherto."[1] On receipt of Müller's letter, the donor of the 100 pounds wrote him to use the sum for the orphans, and, a couple of days later, sent him 200 pounds more for the same purpose.

Müller acknowledged to donors—when, as rarely, he knew who they were—such gifts as they sent; but he never published their names. He only published, periodically, the totals of amounts received and disbursed, with a statement of the uses to which they had been put. For the year 1859-60 the auditor's report shows roughly 10,000 pounds received and spent during the year for the expenses of the orphanage, 8,000 pounds for the other purposes of the missionary Institution, and 45,000 pounds received up to May, 1860, for the fund to add new buildings to the orphanage. Between 1834 and 1860 Müller, only asking God in prayer, received from persons mostly unknown to him, and expended for the purposes stated, a total of nearly one million dollars.

What now shall we think of this truly extraordinary record? Is God's special intervention, in answer to Müller's prayers, the only possible explanation of it, as Müller believed?

The facts do not appear to warrant this conclusion; for although he never asked any person for anything, nevertheless thousands were aware of the simplicity of his personal life; of the complete dedication of it to altruistic purposes; of his consequent need of money for living expenses; of the nature and extent of his philanthropic enterprises; and of their need of support. The mere fact of his being so notoriously humble, sincere and devoted, and of his undertaking to finance such extensive projects in so original a manner, had enormous publicity value. And further, the wholly philanthropic nature of these projects, together with the fact that no one was personally solicited, automatically appealed in the most effective manner to the altruistic impulses latent in men; for these impulses are easily nipped in a man if he suspects that another person is trying to "work" him for disguised selfish purposes, or if another person presumes to tell him what it is his duty to do.

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[1] George Müller, *The Life of Trust* (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1861), p. 483. A narrative of the Lord's dealings with George Müller, written by himself.

These factors, together with the fact that, a hundred years ago, the Christian theology was taken a good deal more seriously by more people than seems to be the case today, appear quite sufficient to account for Müller's remarkable record. Those same psychological factors, moreover, are effectively operating today under our eyes in a purely natural manner at numerous places. Philanthropic undertakings—hospitals, orphans' asylums, educational institutions, lectureships, homes for the indigent aged, the Red Cross, cancer and polio funds, etc.—receive many gifts without personal solicitation of individuals or prayers to God. Almost any altruistic cause, be it the enterprise of Radio Free Europe or the need of blood donations for some particularly pathetic patient, gets spontaneous and often anonymous contributions as soon as some newspaper makes the need widely known. To account for this, the psychology of effective stimulation of the altruistic impulses latent in greater or less degree in most human beings is quite sufficient.

It may be a fact that a prayer for help influences either a God, or—directly by telepathy—some human being, to provide what is needed. But, in order to explain Müller's achievements, there is no need to suppose this, since the persons whose gifts fulfilled the prayers were aware that gifts were needed for certain purposes which particularly appealed to their altruistic impulses. Hence Müller's case, however impressive *prima facie*, quite fails to prove that prayer has external efficacy, as we distinguished this earlier from internal. What the case indicates is that his prayers were psychologically efficacious in making *him* the trusting and admirably unselfish person he eventually became; and that knowledge of and sympathy with his altruistic projects was psychologically efficacious in motivating many *men* to give what was needed to make the projects succeed.

## The Healings at Lourdes

Let us now turn to such evidence of objective efficacy of prayer as may be constituted by the striking instances of healing reported from Lourdes in France. At the present time, precautions are taken there to have the objective facts verified by competent observers: that the person concerned really has the disease or infirmity he is supposed to have; that he really gets cured of it; that the cure was more sudden than could have resulted, if at all, from the ordinary healing processes of the body. There is at Lourdes a Medical Bureau and Bureau of Scientific Studies, reorganized in 1947, equipped with radioscopic, radiographic, and other modern facilities for diagnosis, staffed by competent physicians whose observations are made in collaboration with some of the visiting physicians, many of them specialists in various branches of medicine—Protestants, skeptics, atheists, as well as Catholics—who have visited Lourdes by the thousands in the course of the years.

The function of this Bureau is not to say whether the healings that occur are "miraculous" or not—this is left to the authorities of the Church—but solely to ascertain and report the objective facts. "Your only role," its personnel was told in 1949 by the Bishop of Lourdes, "is to ascertain the truth. Your business is not to be either severe or lenient, but only to be exact, and to provide the Church with medical observations that shall be beyond question, so that, should occasion arise, it may judge whether or not a miracle has occurred."[2] One of the tasks of the Bureau is to expose fakers—persons who make deliberately false claims of healings, which they plan to exploit either for hostile purposes, or out of vanity or cupidity; for such false claims, if exposed otherwise than by the Bureau, would easily discredit its reports of diagnosis and of cure.

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[2] F. Leuret, Lecturer on the Medical Faculty at Bordeaux and President of the Lourdes Medical Bureau, and H. Bon, *Les Guérisons Miraculeuses Modernes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), p. 140.

The author is well aware that religious zeal is unfavorable to objectivity of observation and to faithfulness of report, and he is therefore inclined to great skepticism concerning the testimony of devout persons, whether clerics or laymen, in matters which they conceive as tending either to confirm or to infirm their religious beliefs. But even after allowing full sway to these grounds for skepticism, it does not seem to him possible, if skepticism is to be rational and responsible and not itself a negative form of blind faith, to throw out *a priori* every report of extraordinary events merely because they are extraordinary and because the persons who report them happen to be devout and to regard the events concerned as due to divine intervention. Here as elsewhere, the only scientific course is to scrutinize both the reports and the reporters in the light of the same kinds of criteria employed in assaying the quality and weight of testimony in courts of justice and elsewhere—criteria such as internal coherence of the reports; opportunity the witnesses had to observe what they report; the intelligence, honesty, technical competence, and sources of possibly unconscious bias of the witnesses; and the consistency or inconsistency in essentials of the reports of several equally qualified reporters of the same event. For of course, the fact that the event reported is extraordinary—at variance with common experience—cannot be invoked as ground for *a priori* dismissal of reports of it, since the very question there at issue is whether extraordinary events of the kind concerned ever do happen.

It seems to the author that, irrespective of whether the cases of healing reported by Leuret and Bon are classed by the Church authorities as "miraculous," the reality and extraordinary character of at least some of them is established about as well as human testimony is capable of establishing the occurrence of any events of unusual kinds. Lourdes, of course, or Catholicism, or Christianity, has no monopoly of reports of sudden healings and of other allegedly miraculous events; but it would seem to be true, as the two authors cited assert, that "in no religion other than Catholicism does one see numerous miracles [so-called] *verified by all the resources of modern science*, currently occurring nowadays."[3] At least, the writer knows of no other place than Lourdes where so systematic an attempt is now being made to observe and record scientifically the observable facts connected with the extraordinary healings alleged to be "miracles."

## Possible Explanations of the Healings

When it comes to accounting for their occurrence, however, no evidence that could be called scientific exists that the Virgin Mary or Jesus or God have anything to do with the healings. For one thing—so far as can be judged from the instances cited in the book mentioned—in only a small proportion of healings, and these not among the best attested, was the patient an infant too young to understand at least that an attempt to cure him was being made; and it would be only in such instances that *suggestion* would be ruled out as a potential agency of cure. In cases of the healing of children other than these, the very fact of their being children means, as pointed out in the last chapter, that they are even more suggestible than adults, and therefore that the hypothesis of suggestion as curative agent has added plausibility in their case. Just how far suggestion is potentially capable of affecting somatic processes is not yet known, but what has experimentally been shown to be possible under hypnosis is extraordinary enough to lead one to suspect that still more may be possible, without need of invoking supernatural intervention.

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 8, italics and "[so-called]," added.

Aside from this, however, a point to which attention was called in an earlier chapter is worth stressing again, namely, that the supposition that prayer, when unselfish and fervent enough, and coupled with intense faith in its efficacy, may *itself* be an agency *directly* capable of causing physical events external to the person who prays, is neither more nor less paradoxical, and is more economical, than the hypothesis that the will of some supernatural or spiritual being is what *directly* causes the physical event concerned, after the prayer has moved that being to exert his postulated marvelous power. The first hypothesis is more economical than the second because, *in both of them alike*, the somehow *direct* action of a mind on matter is postulated, and because the second hypothesis postulates *in addition* and therefore needlessly, that some divine being or agent exists, *and* hears the prayer, *and* is moved by it. Of course, visions of the Virgin, of angels, of saints, or of other personages of the Christian tradition, constitute no evidence to support the second hypothesis; but evidence only that visionaries brought up in this tradition do, like those brought up in that of Hinduism, of Tibetan Lamaism, or of the other religions, see in their visions the particular kinds of personages which their particular religion has accustomed them to think of and to believe in; and has therefore predisposed them to see if they should see any at all.

It is interesting to note that the supposition that prayer may be a force somehow capable of itself operating directly on the minds and the bodies of persons who are other than the person praying and are unaware that they are being prayed for, receives some empirical support from the experimental demonstrations at Duke University and elsewhere that sometimes telepathy and telekinesis really occur; that is, that mental states in one mind can affect those in another without use of the bodily organs of expression and of sensation; and that volitions can sometimes affect directly, i.e., without use of the bodily organs of action, the behavior of external physical objects, for instance, of dice.[4] It is true that the effects demonstrated in these experiments are of very small magnitude. But, from the point of view of science, which aims to discover empirically what in Nature is possible by natural processes, the essentially interesting point here is that such effects should occur at all. That, in the experiments referred to, they were of such minute size as to be revealed only by statistical treatment of the recorded results may be important for discovery of the conditions favorable or unfavorable to occurrence of the effect; but it is the fact that the effect *does* verifiably occur, which certifies the reality of a range of possibilities hitherto unrecognized by the natural sciences.

## Efficacy of Prayer for Internal Results

By prayer for internal results is meant here primarily prayer for bodily or mental changes *in one's self*; for instance, for healing of some organic or functional disease or weakness, or of some injury or deformity; or for power to resist temptations to drunkenness or other particular forms of vice; or for the gaining of patience, humility, resignation, courage, unselfishness, or other virtues one is especially conscious of lacking; or for growth, or insight, and so on.

But prayer for such effects in the body or mind of *another* person will also be classed here as prayer for internal results if that person knows that such changes in him are being prayed for by someone; for it then remains possible to suppose that the change, if any, which occurs in him, is the effect *not directly* of the prayer, nor indirectly, of God's aid, but of subconscious processes induced in the person concerned by his *knowing* that that change was being prayed for. Hence, if auto- or heterosuggestion, in the form of prayer, is what acts on body or mind to cause the effects in view, this second class of cases reduces theoretically to prayer for internal changes.

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[4] See, for example, J. B. Rhine, *The Reach of the Mind* (New York: William Sloan Associates, Inc., 1947).

Bodily effects, when authentic, even ones extraordinarily sudden or extensive, would then be naturalistically accounted for as instances of psychotherapeutic action occurring under circumstances that happen to be somehow exceptionally favorable. That bodily processes normally autonomous are capable of being influenced by suggestion is definitely known. McDougall mentions, for example, an experiment by Professor Delboeuf: "In two subjects he produced burns on the skin of both forearms, taking care to make them symmetrical and equally severe on both limbs. Taking all due precautions, he found that, when the lesion on one arm was left to nature and that on the other arm was treated by suggestion (suggestion directed against pain and inflammation, and in favor of rapid healing), the latter developed distinctly less inflammation and healed much more rapidly."[5] The only questions, then, are as to what may be the natural limits of rapidity and of extent of such psychotherapeutic action, and as to what features of the prayerful state of consciousness may be especially favorable to abnormal healing. As to those limits, McDougall writes: "We have no positive knowledge of the extent of such mental influences on bodily processes; but that mental conditions can affect favourably or unfavourably the healing of wounds and the lesions of tuberculosis has long been recognized, even in orthodox medical circles. And the successes of those forms of therapy which invoke the aid of strong religious sentiments . . . should render us open-minded in this obscure and controversial region."[6] Leuba also, after mentioning that some psychotherapists claim to have cured tuberculosis, writes to the same general effect: "How far may psychical agents go in remedying, indirectly, organic affections? That is a question to which nobody at present is competent to give a final answer."[7] After several chapters in which he discusses and illustrates the nature and the achievements of the methods employed by psychotherapists, and compares these achievements with those which the faithful attribute to divine action, he further writes: "Our survey of the deeds of man and of those ascribed to God in the healing of body and mind, points to an equal limitation of each. How difficult it is to escape that conclusion may be inferred from the fact that even a committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to investigate divine healing, affirms that there is no evidence that spiritual healing can produce cures of a kind which cannot be paralleled by similar cures wrought by scientific psychotherapy without religion."[8]

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[5] Wm. McDougall, *Outline of Abnormal Psychology* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 101.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 101–2.

Similarly in cases of character reformation, the effective psychological factors are getting to be well understood and are being employed with success without appeal to religious beliefs by various organizations. "A powerful movement carried on by educators, psychologists, social workers, and even psychiatrists is on foot, sweeping past the religions."[9]

## The Prayerful Consciousness

The fact that scientific psychotherapy, although still a young science, duplicates many of the cures ascribed by the devout to God's intervention, leads one to ask whether—if any of the latter that are genuine really go far beyond what psychotherapy now can do—an explanation sufficient to account for this without postulating action by a supernatural agency is not already at hand.

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[7] J. H. Leuba, *God or Man?* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1933), p. 198.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 199. Leuba's reference here is to "The Lambeth Committee Report," 1924.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 146 and pp. 143–50.

Such an explanation might invoke three factors. The first would be that the antecedent preparation and the concomitant circumstances, under which those "miracles" occur, are of the kinds and degrees known to be most capable of making suggestion highly effective; and that those circumstances—for example, the elaborate and spectacular rites at Lourdes, the dramatic setting, the reputation of the shrine, and the powerful influence of crowd psychology on the individual—cannot be duplicated or even approximated in hospitals or in private psychotherapeutic practice. Leuba, in support of his contention that a purely natural explanation of supposedly miraculous cures is possible, points out that "Love, peace, confidence —these removers of wasteful fear-inhibitions and of the sense of inferiority—work in the Christian religion whether God, Christ, the Virgin, and the saints are living personalities or mere creations of the human mind." Also, a voice that is believed divine "comes to the faithful with an authority, a prestige not to be equalled by that of any man. It comes, moreover, usually to a person artfully prepared for the ready acceptance of suggestion, by exercises and forms of worship which are the residual wisdom of thousands of years of more or less unconscious experimentation."[10]

Besides this, and in the absence of the data needed, one may well suspect that the persons to whom the "miracles" occur are psychologically not an average sample of the population, nor even of the devout, but probably are individuals who happen to possess the same three characteristics which Coe found necessary for conversions of the crisis type: desire for and expectation of, in this case, cure; suggestibility of the passive type; and temperament of the sensitive rather than intellectual, and of the emotional rather than active types. Possession of these characteristics would be the second factor in the more extraordinary cures effected by prayer.

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[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 153–54.

The third factor would consist in certain peculiarities, which the prayerful state of consciousness is capable of having, and which it exhibits in these cases and in certain others —peculiarities which make the person then praying far more plastic psychologically than he is at other times. There is no doubt that a deep belief that one is loved and cared for by an all-powerful and all-wise God is apt to bring to him who has it the confidence, the feeling of safety; the inner peace and joy mentioned in the account of the nature of personal religiousness in the last chapter. It is also true, as Leuba emphasizes, that these and allied feelings—no matter whether gained in this way or otherwise—are inherently more conducive to health of body and mind than are feelings of fear, of inferiority, of suspicion, ill will, envy, anxiety, and discouragement. But there is a factor which, when present in the prayerful consciousness in addition to mere wish and petition, generates great psychological plasticity in the person who prays, and hence much increases the likelihood that transformations of character or somatic improvements prayed for will occur. That factor is difficult to describe better than as *aspiration* coupled with *self-surrender*. This differs from ordinary wish or desire, which essentially seeks to *have* or *get* something. It is rather a fervent longing to *become* and *be* different from, and in one or another particular respect *better* than, the self which in practice one is at the time and which one surrenders. It is an intense yearning to let higher, nobler, more "divine" potentialities of one's being actualize themselves in conviction, in feeling and in action. Believers in a God think of this higher level of their human nature as being awakened by communion with God. But Jainas and Buddhists, who do not think of it in terms of the concepts of a God and of communion with him, also aspire to rise up to it, and, in their meditations or other spiritual exercises, do so with the same varying measures of success achieved by theists in their prayers.

The element just described, when it enters into prayer, spiritualizes it in the sense of purging it of selfishness and of search for mere self-gratification. It elevates the ethical level of the prayer and, for the time being softens or melts the tenacious little ego of the individual, permitting it to become impressed with a different pattern by nobler elements of his being, which otherwise remain dormant except when adventitiously aroused from time to time by outer circumstances that tease out the potential hero. One aspect of such an inner transformation is that in it the individual becomes able to believe firmly about himself things which previously he was well aware were not then true. And the control of normally autonomous somatic processes, which results from a hypnotized subject's complete belief of the suggestions given him in deep trance, indicates that completeness of belief, no matter how induced, as to the state or the capacities of one's body, is capable of causing extraordinary effects. How far these may go is, as already pointed out, not finally known. Well-attested reports of certain feats of Indian yogis who train themselves in psychological athletics for years, and of faculties sometimes manifested by mystics of both the theistic and nontheistic religions, lead one to suspect that the limits of possible natural control of mind over body may not be as narrow as now is commonly assumed.

## The Normal Values of Prayer

Whatever conclusions one may reach with regard to the genuineness of the extraordinary somatic effects reported to result occasionally from prayer, or the manner—whether direct, or through the enlisting of supernatural aid—in which prayer may cause such effects, the fact remains that prayer, of the right sort, has great psychological values, to the reality of which any devout person in the habit of praying can testify from his own experience. Some of these values are explicitly mentioned by one of Pratt's correspondents, who, it is worth noting, states that his conception of God is "rather abstract than personal" and that he inclines to believe "that petitions do not affect God." Yet, he finds it expedient to go on making petitions because of the stimulus they give him in the quest of that for which he asks. He states that his prayer is mostly "a seeking after what is best for me or for others," and adds: "By determining to strive after it, I bring into play a better self within to aid in obtaining it." Also, he finds that "it is a good thing to formulate definitely one's desires and ideals, and by examining into their motives decide whether or not they are worthy." These subjective benefits of prayer, he finds, "are sufficient to make it very much worthwhile. In fact, if such earnest self-examination and meditation as I have described is to be considered prayer (and I so consider it) it is indispensable." [11]

Pratt adds that the subjective value of prayer is not restricted to any one type of prayer. Prayer of confession, for example, "relieves the pent-up feelings, clarifies the conscience, and strengthens the will . . . the fact that it does these things is dependent upon no theory, but is a purely empirical observation." [12]

In an earlier chapter, we already had occasion to notice and to comment to some extent critically on, Pratt's assertion that the subjective effects of prayer, such as those mentioned above, "are almost invariably due, directly or indirectly, to some real faith in an objective relation between the prayerful soul and some sort of 'Higher Power' above or 'Spiritual World' round about, from Whom or from which new influxes of spiritual life may actually come." [13] Our own contention has been that although the vast majority of persons who pray do actually have faith in such a relationship—which is so easy a psychological extension of the child's relationship to his parents, but whose ease is not the slightest evidence of its corresponding to a fact—yet, that the faith be of this particular form is not essential to the prayerful state of consciousness nor to its efficacy. The "Higher Power" or "Spiritual World" Pratt refers to as object of the faith of the prayerful soul may but need not be thought of as "above" or "round about." It may very well be conceived as *within* the individual soul's own *divine* recesses. One may well ask why man insists, as Nietzsche somewhere points out he so commonly does, in disavowing as really his own whatever nobility or divinity of feelings or of impulse surges up in him, and in ascribing it instead to some divine influence external to himself. The mood of humility and reverence, which is favorable to these surges and which prayer cultivates, does not require that their source be conceived as without not within. Pratt's own remarks in connection with the benefits of prayers of confession indicate that the confession itself is what has efficacy, and not—except as beliefs capable of inducing the act of confession—whether the hearer of the confession be conceived as god or as man, or as within or without, if only he be conceived as forgiving whatever is contritely confessed. For, Pratt tells us, the manner in which confession operates "is constantly better understood. The methods used by Freud, Jung, Prince, Sidis, and other psychiatrists, of curing various psychic and neurotic disorders through the unearthing of some buried psychic complex, have demonstrated the great therapeutic value of confession." [14]

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[11] J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), pp. 330–31.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 335.

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

## Chapter 14

# MYSTICISM

The reference made in what precedes to the "communion," which prayer sometimes aspires to, brings us to the subject of mysticism. The word is derived from a Greek verb which originally means *to keep one's mouth shut*, hence, to keep something unspoken, secret. The root is the same as that of the word "mystery," which in its early usage denoted a secret religious rite; so that a *Mystes*, i.e., a mystic, was a person who had been initiated into religious mysteries.

Since then, the word "mysticism" has come to be used in a variety of senses, some of them relevant to the present inquiry and others not. Coe refers to seven different ones in which the word is currently employed. It is a name sometimes for certain religious experiences; sometimes for the interpretations put on them by those who have them; sometimes for a doctrine as to inner knowledge of God; or again, for a certain theory of the nature of reality; or for internal religious experience as distinguished from ceremonies, dogmas, and good works; or for supernatural intervention in the natural order; and, popularly, mysticism is another name for superstition.[1]

In what follows, we shall take the adjective "mystical" as referring basically to certain peculiar states of consciousness and to the practices employed to obtain them. These states are, first and typically, the trances and ecstasies of the persons which the expression "the great historical mystics" commonly denotes; for example, the Buddha, Plotinus, St. Teresa, Suso, Mme Guyon, al Ghazzali, Ramakrishna, among many others.

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[1] G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), pp. 263–64.

We shall attempt to discern the characteristics which differentiate those states of consciousness from kinds of states to which the term "mystical" would not be applied. If we succeed in this, we shall then be in position to ask what other states of consciousness, if any, also exhibit, though perhaps in lesser degrees or in more or less different forms, those same essential characteristics, and are therefore to be classed as mystical also. After we have thus identified the scope of this term, other questions will then be in order—questions as to the variety of means which lead to mystical experiences, as to what those experiences signify, as to their impact on the mystic's life subsequent to them, and as to the extraordinary somatic effects and mental faculties which are alleged to result sometimes from the cultivation of mystical states of consciousness.

### Firsthand Descriptions of Mystical Experiences

Let us begin by considering a few of the statements in which mystics have attempted to describe certain of their mystical experiences. Plotinus, for example, writes as follows: "In this seeing we neither see nor distinguish nor are there two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor self-belonging; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It; only in separation is there duality. This is why the vision baffles telling . . . Beholder was one with beheld, and it was not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended, the man formed by this mingling with the Supreme . . . is become the Unity . . .; no movement now, no passion, no out-looking desire, once this ascent is achieved; reason is in abeyance and intellection and even the very self; caught away, God-possessed, in perfect stillness, all the being calmed, he turns neither to this side nor to that, nor even inwards to himself; utterly resting, he has become rest itself." (En. VI, ix, 10, 11.) Again: "Many times it has happened: Lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things; beholding a marvellous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; living the noblest life, acquiring identity with the Divine; poised above whatsoever is less than the Supreme." (En. IV, viii, 1.) [2]

Another great mystic, Saint Teresa de Jesus, describes the mystical state of ecstatic union. Her words may be translated as follows: "Here there is no functioning of the senses, but only enjoying without understanding what is being enjoyed. There is understanding that a good is being enjoyed, in which every good is contained; but this good is not understood. All the senses are absorbed in this enjoyment, in such manner that no single one remains free to occupy itself in anything else, whether interiorly or exteriorly." In the mystical state preceding this ecstatic union, "there was freedom for the senses . . . to give some signs of the great joy they were experiencing; but now the soul's joy is incomparably greater, and can be much less adequately described, for no power remains in the body, nor has the soul any that would enable it to communicate that joy." Again: "While the soul is thus seeking God, she feels, with a most high and sweet delight, as if wholly sinking in a kind of swoon in which breath and all the bodily forces begin to fail; so that only with great difficulty can she manage the hands; the eyes close without her wishing to close them, or if she keeps them open, she sees almost nothing."

Saint Teresa observes that "whatever the duration of the soul's being in this state of suspension of all the powers, it is always very short: if half-an-hour, this is very much." [3] The suspension is of the capacity to think, as well as of capacity to use the senses: In the state of union, the soul is "asleep to the things of the world and to itself," for "however brief its duration, she remains as it were without senses, and without power to think even if she would; there is no need of devices for suspending thought. Even if she loves, she does not understand how, nor what it is she loves, nor what it is she would have; in short, she is as one dead to the world in every way, in order to live the more in God." [4]

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[2] Translations by Grace H. Turnbull in *The Essence of Plotinus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 146, 221.

[3] *Obras Completas de Santa Teresa de Jesús, Vida,* M. Aguilar (Madrid: 1932), chap. xviii, pp. 77, 79, 80.

Jacob Boehme reports his own mystical experience as follows: ". . . I reached to the innermost Birth of the Deity and there I was embraced with love as a bridegroom embraces his bride . . . In this Light, my spirit suddenly saw through all, and in all created things, even in herbs and grass, I knew God—who He is, how He is, and what His will is—and suddenly in that Light my will was set upon by a mighty impulse to describe the being of God." [5]

Hugo of St. Victor writes: "I am suddenly renewed: I am changed: I am plunged into an ineffable peace. My mind is full of gladness, all my past wretchedness and pain is forgot. My soul exults: my intellect is illuminated: my heart is afire: my desires have become kindly and gentle: I know not where I am, because my Love has embraced me. Also, because my Love has embraced me I seem to have become possessed of something, and I know not what it is . . . My soul . . . exults in a sovereign and ineffable manner, seeking nought, desiring nought, but to rest in this." [6]

To these few descriptions by great religious mystics of their climactic experiences, we may add one which is of particular interest as coming from a man, Dr. R. M. Bucke, who, besides having himself had the same kind of experience, was a practicing psychiatrist. The account he gives of his own mystical experience is contained in an autobiographical sketch, written in the third person, to be found in the first few pages of his book *Cosmic Consciousness*.[7] The central passage is as follows:

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[4] *Ibid.*, *Castillo Interior*, Fifth Abode, chap. i, p. 422.

[5] Quoted by Rufus Jones in *The Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939), p. 257, from J. Boehme, *Aurora*, chap. xix, pp. 10–13.

[6] Quoted by Evelyn Underhill in *Mysticism* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1912), p. 294, from Hugo of St. Victor, "De Arrha Anima."

> "All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around as it were by a flame-colored cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration in the great city; the next he knew the light was within himself. Directly afterwards came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe . . . Among other things, he did not merely come to believe, he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love and that the happiness of every one is in the long run absolutely certain. He claims that he learned more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and he learned much that no study could ever have taught. The illumination itself continued not more than a few moments, but its effects proved ineffaceable . . . There was no return that night or at any other time of the experience."

Bucke's book is a review of instances on record, or known privately to him, of men who have experienced "cosmic consciousness," and of their accounts of it. On the basis of his study of these accounts as well as of his own experience, he introduces the notion of "cosmic consciousness" on the second page of the book, as follows:

> "The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is . . . a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe . . . Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment or illumination which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence—would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense,

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[7] R. M. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1905), pp. 7, 8.

> which is fully as striking and more important both to the individual and to the race than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these come, what may be called, a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already."

## Some Proposed Characterizations of Mysticism

From the preceding few examples of the words in which the mystics themselves have attempted to describe the attained climax of their spiritual strivings, let us now turn to some of the characterizations of mysticism which students of the mystics have offered; and let us ask how adequate those characterizations may be as criteria by which to identify given experiences as mystical, or on the contrary as nonmystical.

According to Dean Inge, "religious mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, more generally, as *the attempt to realise, in thought and in feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal.*" [8]

Evidently, the first part of this definition would fit at most only the mysticism of the theistic mystics. It tacitly assumes that all religious mystics believe in the existence of a God, and thus disregards the fact that experiences and practices psychologically quite parallel to those of the Christian and other theistic mystics are found among the devotees of nontheistic religions such as Jainism and Buddhism. An account of the nature of mysticism should fit "the sacred frenzy of the Bacchantes, the trance of the sibyls, the ecstasy of the Neo-Platonists, the enlightenment that came to Gautama Buddha under the sacred Bo-tree," as well as "the visions of the canonized saints, the absorptions into God experienced by various mystics, and the religious epidemics of the Middle Ages." [9]

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[8] W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1899), p. 5.

[9] G. A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900), p. 141.

Dean Inge's first definition, moreover, is a characterization not of *the experience itself*, which the mystic strives to obtain, but of what theistic mystics conceive that experience to *signify*, viz., that God is present in the soul and in nature. Hence, that definition furnishes no empirical criterion by which to determine whether a given experience is or is not mystical. It may be further noted in passing that in the definition, the qualification of God as "living" is not introduced to differentiate the God meant from a dead God, but solely and, in a definition, improperly, for emotional purposes. That is, "living" functions there merely as a "boost" word, just as, in the familiar expression, "dead matter," the word "dead" usually functions only as a "smear" word.

Again, the words italicized by Dean Inge, which purport to give a more general definition of mysticism, are so tightly packed with assumptions both metaphysical and dubious that pages would be required to explicate them, to say nothing of vindicating them. As an empirical criterion for the identification of such experiences as are mystical, that general definition is obviously useless.

Let us consider next a definition offered by Canon Ribet. After distinguishing between doctrinal and experimental mystical theology, he defines the latter as: "a supernatural and passive attraction of the soul, towards God, coming from an internal illumination and an internal fire, which outrun reflection, surpass human effort, and can have on the body a marvellous and irresistible repercussion."[10] This characterization has the virtue of noting that mystical experiences are passive and nonrational, and that they may have somatic repercussions; but, beyond this, the definition only states, in somewhat rhapsodical terms, a theistic theory of what mystical experiences signify.

The German philosopher, Von Hartmann, defines "the essence of the mystical," distinguished from its various excres-

[10] J. Ribet, *La Mystique Divine* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1895), Vol. I, p. 26.

cences, as "the filling of consciousness with a content (feeling, thought, desire) through involuntary emergence of the same from the unconscious."[11] This definition is unfortunately so broad that it would class as mystical not only the feeling which Von Hartmann regards as the content *par excellence* of the mystical experience and as the ultimate and highest aim of the mystic's endeavor, to wit, the immediate feeling of identity of the individual with the Absolute; but avowedly also clairvoyance, presentiments, and instinctive faith or certainty; also the inspirations of "all eminent art-geniuses" and of "every original philosopher . . . so far as he is truly original"; and also, "all the aesthetic feeling in contemplation and production, the origin of sensuous perception and the unconscious processes in thinking, feeling, and willing generally."

That the trances and ecstasies of the mystics are but extreme instances of a general kind of experience that has also far more numerous mild and even trivial instances is probably a sound assumption. But one may well doubt the wisdom of defining that general kind of experience, as does Von Hartmann, so broadly that it includes as mystical the countless feelings, thoughts and impulses which every day pop adventitiously into the consciousness of each of us.

Turning now to a contemporary writer, we find Wright defining religious mysticism in general as "the endeavor to secure consciousness of the presence of the Agency through which (or through Whom) the conservation of socially recognized values is sought."[12] This definition ties up mysticism, not with a particular theology, but, equally unfortunately, with a particular conception of the generic nature of religion —one, moreover, which, when we considered it in Chapter 6, we found open to a number of objections.

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[11] Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, trans. W. C. Coupland (London: Kegan Paul, 1890), Vol. I, pp. 363–64.

[12] W. K. Wright, *A Student's Philosophy of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 287.

Leuba defines as mystical "any experience taken by the experiencer to be a contact (not through the senses, but 'immediate', 'intuitive') or union of the self with a larger-than-self, be it called the World Spirit, God, the Absolute, or otherwise." [13] This definition too ties up mysticism implicitly with one particular conception of religion—that which Leuba formulates in terms of man's social method of satisfying his needs, as distinguished from the mechanical and the magical methods.[14] The definition also has the defect that it proposes to identify mystical experiences not in terms of their intrinsic characters, but in terms of the experiencer's personal opinion as to what the experience signifies. It should be stated, however, that Leuba's highly interesting and valuable discussion of mysticism transcends the limits which his definition, if taken strictly, would impose.

Coe, in lieu of a definition, offers a psychological "genealogy" of mysticism, according to which its primitive root consists in automatic experiences (hallucinations and motor automatisms) interpreted as due to "possession" i.e., to temporary occupation of a person's body by some extraneous "spirit." Out of this grow spiritistic practices, both the ancient and the contemporary. In turn, religious inspiration, as a psychological process, is, he holds, continuous with spiritism, and "from inspirations to religious ecstasy also the passage is continuous." [15] The perspective this putative genealogy offers is interesting, even if the alleged continuity is far from evident at all points.

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[13] J. H. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1925), p. 1.

[14] J. H. Leuba, *God or Man?* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1933), pp. 4–8.

[15] Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, *op. cit.*, chap. xvi, pp. 264–67.

## The Marks Distinctive of Mystical States

Both James and Pratt avoid introducing into their proposed definitions of mystical experience either theological assumptions or theories of the nature of religion. They consider the mystical experiences, of which we have quoted a few of the many firsthand accounts available, directly as psychological states, and attempt to isolate the characteristics which together mark off these states as "mystical."

James finds four such marks: ineffability, transiency, passivity, and noetic quality.[16] Like Von Hartmann, James regards the experiences of the great mystics as representing exceptionally intense and impressive instances of a kind of phenomenon whose milder and more common cases have no specifically religious significance. According to him, "the simplest rudiment of mystical experience would seem to be that deepened sense of the significance of a maxim or formula which occasionally sweeps over one. 'I've heard that said all my life', we exclaim, 'but I never realized its full meaning until now'."

Pratt likewise approaches mysticism simply and directly as "a peculiar form of experience differing *psychologically* from all others," and defines it as "the sense of the presence of a being or reality through other means than the ordinary perceptive processes or the reason"—emphasizing that "it is the *sense* or *feeling* of this presence, not the belief in it, and it is not the result of sight or hearing or touch, nor is it a conclusion one reaches by thought; it is, instead, an immediate and intuitive experience." [17] Pratt too would class as mystical not only the trances and ecstasies of the religious mystics, but also certain mild and common experiences in which there is "consciousness of a Beyond," but in which this "Beyond" is then not of a specifically religious nature.

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[16] Wm. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1902), lect. xvi, pp. 380–82.

[17] J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), p. 337.

As evidently resembling closely Pratt's "sense of presence" of a reality unseen, we may cite also the conception of the mystical entertained by Coe when he writes: "we may even go so far as to say that all real religion consists ultimately in some mystical practice, namely, the making real to ourselves of that which we do not perceive." [18]

Conjunction of the four marks mentioned by James seems to be about as definite a criterion as is available, wherewith to differentiate mystical from nonmystical states of consciousness. In the concrete, however, we may find it difficult, in some of the milder states, to decide whether or not to call them mystical.

The first of those four marks, ineffability, i.e., indescribability, unutterability, is widely recognized as characteristic of mystical states. It follows from the fact that they are "immediate" experiences in the sense in which sensations and emotions, considered in themselves, are so. That is, they are not construings of the import of signs or of symbols—as on the contrary the judgment that it is raining is a construing of, sometimes, the significance of a certain crepitant sound being heard; or the thought of the cross, or it may be of addition, a construing of the import of a figure such as +. A sensation, say that of red color, cannot be described to a person born blind. The name "Red" tells him nothing. On the other hand, anyone with normal eyes—even an infant in arms—who looks at blood or at a red poppy, experiences that sensation even if ignorant of its name. The same is true of the emotions. The only way to know what love, or jealousy, or anxiety, is like is to experience it. Without this, one may know everything *about* it, but one does not know *it*.

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[18] G. A. Coe, "The Sources of the Mystical Revelation," *Hibbert Journal,* VI (1907–8), p. 372.

Mystical states are in the same case. A person may know that a certain one of them is called "ecstasy," but unless he has himself experienced, at least in mild form, the kind of state of which this word is the name, he does not know the intrinsic nature of it even if he happens to know a great deal *about* it, e.g., its causes and its effects.

The second of the marks of a state as mystical, namely, transiency, means that mystical states do not endure for any great length of time. Sometimes such a state is a mere flash, come and gone in a moment; or it may last for some minutes. In either case, it leaves behind some memory of itself and affects more or less strongly thereafter the disposition and behavior of the person concerned, and the emotional tone of his life.

The third mark, passivity, means that mystical states *happen* to the persons who have them; i.e., they cannot be obtained at will. It is possible to aspire after them, to remove obstacles in the way of their occurrence, and to prepare one's self for them. One may strive actively to induce the passive, receptive state during which they come if they come at all. But one cannot compel them to come. Like sensations, or like the words we hear other persons utter, their advent depends in part on some factor external to the normal consciousness and the will. As in the case of "bright ideas," there is no sure recipe for getting them.

## The Noetic Quality of Mystical States

The remaining mark, noetic quality, is of especial interest. In most cases, mystics who attempt to articulate their experience use in doing this such terms as "illumination" or "insight," although they are unable to say what specifically the insight was; or they find only some perhaps quite trivial object to which to relate it. James and others have mentioned in this connection the "revelations" some persons experience under the influence of nitrous oxide, ether, or other anesthetics.[19] The author, acting on James' advice to try this for one's self, once had a dentist administer to him an anesthetic gas to see whether he would experience the "anesthetic revelation." The first trial brought nothing. But repetition of it a few minutes later succeeded. The profound insight obtained was insight into the sound of the words "Breathe away!" which the dentist was uttering!

Subsequent reflection on the experience brought out that, under the influence of the gas, the psychological time-span had become altered so that those two words had been heard "in slow motion." This had provided opportunity for a vast amount of scrutiny of their ordinarily undiscriminated auditory components, just as the slow-motion picture of a diver's or a boxer's movements makes it possible to observe the otherwise undiscriminated visual components of these. In the auditory as in the visual experience, a feeling of great insight is aroused, notwithstanding that that, into which insight is obtained, is ordinarily itself nothing great. This *feeling of insight*—which of course might be aroused in various ways other than by alteration or virtual alteration of the time-span; which, moreover could have many different kinds of objects; and which is independent of the importance or unimportance of what happens to be its object on particular occasions—would seem to be what essentially constitutes the "noetic quality" of mystical states of consciousness. It appears to be that to which the word *sense* refers both in James' characterization of that noetic quality as a "sense of significance," and in Pratt's characterization of it as a "sense of presence" or "consciousness of a Beyond." What is "beyond," i.e., what, in the experience, is apprehended anomalously, may equally be the hitherto unrecognized *significance* of something present to the senses, or, conversely, the *reality*—the existence and presence—of something thought of but not seen, i.e., not present to the senses. But in either case, the "*sense*" itself, whether of significance or of presence, would seem to consist simply in the *feeling of insight* referred to above.

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[19] See in particular the note at the end of James' essay, "On Some Hegelisms," in the volume *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1908), pp. 294–98.

Light is thrown on the mechanism of such anomalous apprehension of a "beyond" by Leuba's analysis of the psychological components of the perception of presence of a person—an analysis which, it should be noted, applies equally to cases where that, presence of which is perceived, happens to be something other than a person whether human or divine; for instance, is what we might call a spiritual climate, or is a thing, or a place, or a state of weather, etc.

Leuba points out that ordinarily, when one sees a person, i.e., perceives his presence visually, two factors are involved. One of them is his visual appearance; the other is the specific total attitude—emotional, intellectual and practical—induced in us by that appearance, and appropriate uniquely toward who and what we believe this particular person to be. On this point Leuba writes: "When we see someone, and 'feel' his presence, our whole psycho-physical attitude is modified; the facial and bodily expressions are altered, feelings and emotions are generated—feelings and emotions which differ with the person in the presence of whom we are—and, in addition, thought is given a new direction; it centers now about our relations with the person of the presence of whom we are aware." [20]

If, however, the comprehensive psycho-physical attitude specifically fitting toward a certain person known to us fails to be induced by his visual appearance, then we do not feel that *he* is present, but only a stranger who resembles him; i.e., the usual *significance* of the appearance is lacking. Leuba mentions the case of a neurasthenic man who, seeing his daughter before him, says, "It seems to me that she is not my daughter, for if she were my daughter I should experience a great joy."[21]

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[20] J. H. Leuba, *The Belief in God and Immortality* (Boston: Sherman, French & Co., 1916), pp. 48–49.

If, on the other hand, the person thought of is not actually present and therefore is not seen, and yet the attitude specifically appropriate toward him gets somehow vividly induced in us, then what occurs in us is perception of him as *present but unseen.* Leuba mentions the instance of St. Teresa's first "sensation of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ," which, according to the account she gives of it in her autobiography, involved neither visual sensations nor visual images; that is, it was an experience of presence unseen. The passage to which Leuba only alludes is worth citing here in full, and—seeking literalness rather than elegance—may be translated as follows:

> Being in prayer on a day of the feast of glorious St. Peter, I saw beside me, or, to put it better, I felt—since I saw nothing with the eyes either of the body or of the soul and yet it seemed to me—that Christ was close beside me; and I saw that it was He who it seemed to me was speaking to me. Because I was most ignorant that one could have a vision of this kind, it gave me great fear at first, and I did nothing but weep; although, on His saying to me a single word to reassure me, I then remained as usual quiet and refreshed and without any fear. Jesus Christ seemed to me always at my side, but, since this was not an image-vision, I did not see in what form. I only felt very clearly His being always at my right, and that He was a witness of all I did; and, at no time when I became somewhat collected or not much distracted, could I other than be aware that He was near me.[22]

Out of intense experiences of this kind, visions—i.e., "image-visions"—and sensory hallucinations may precipitate, as indeed eventually occurred with St. Teresa. In such cases, what we have is a reversal of the ordinary causal relationship: normally, the visual sensations are what induces the specific attitude; here on the contrary, the attitude, cultivated by prolonged thought on the nature and appearance of the object to which it would be appropriate, namely, Jesus, was what eventually induced visual images or even visual pseudo-sensations of the appearance of the object. This is especially likely to occur when the emotional components of the attitude are strong, for instance, when the conceived object of the attitude is a divine being, or perhaps a dead person to whom one was greatly attached. Leuba suggests—although this seems rather improbable—that belief in survival of death and ghosts may have had this origin.[23]

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[21] J. H. Leuba, *God or Man?, op. cit.*, p. 217.

[22] *Obras completas, Vida,* M. Aguilar (Madrid: 1932), p. 128.

This general conception of two elements—one objective, i.e., sensory, and the other subjective—as normally cooperating, and in a certain order, in experiences of presence, applies equally to experiences of significance. It applies no matter whether that which is apprehended as present be a particular person, or thing, or place, or situation, etc., and no matter whether that which is apprehended as having a certain significance be, as in James' example, a statement, or some material object such perhaps as a bone or a piece of wood, or a person, or a place or date, etc.; and no matter whether the significance be emotional, intellectual, or practical. Moreover, that general conception applies both to cases where the presence or the significance apprehended is veridical, and to cases where it is illusory.

A few commonplace instances of various ways in which the objective and the subjective factors contemplated in that general conception can get related in practice will illustrate both the normal and the anomalous functioning of the psychological mechanism these factors constitute.

One concrete example would be that of the fall of an apple, traditionally said to have been witnessed by Newton. The event perceived in this case was of a familiar kind, but the intellectual *significance* of it in respect to the behavior of the moon, which suddenly dawned on Newton, had not for him previously attached to that kind of event. In this example, the significance apprehended did correspond to a real objective similarity between the behavior of the apple and that of the moon.

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[23] Leuba, *The Belief in God and Immortality, op. cit.*, pp. 47–50.

A similar instance, but one where there is no such correspondence, and where the significance is therefore illusory, would be that of a person, who, while engaged in his ordinary occupations, suddenly notices that the day is a Friday and the thirteenth. If he is superstitious, the day, which until that moment seemed like any other, suddenly becomes for him significant of bad luck.

Another example—related somewhere, I think, by Alexandra David-Neel—is that of a bone which was believed to be a relic of some Tibetan saint, and which, as endued with this significance, worked miracles, although in fact it happened to be the bone of a dog.

Sometimes, what occurs is the psychological converse of the process in the preceding instances; that is, what is present is a certain belief or attitude, and what is novel is realization of its relevance to some *prima facie* unlikely object. It is one thing, for example, to believe in the abstract that one should love one's fellow men as one's self; and it is quite another thing to recognize suddenly as signified, i.e., here, denoted, by "fellow man"—and therefore as a person toward whom one has this obligation—even the burglar one catches some night breaking into one's house.

Or again, it would be one thing to believe in and abhor witchcraft, and another and shocking thing suddenly to identify as a witch perhaps one's mother or wife. Persons who believe that there are no witches would say that such identification is then necessarily mistaken; but the consequences to any person so identified were at one time likely to be the same as if she had really been a witch.

What is peculiar to the noetic quality of the mystical experiences, i.e., to the "sense," whether of presence or of significance and whether illusory or veridical, which characterizes them, would seem to be that that "sense"—the feeling of insight—is in their case generated in some anomalous manner and then gets attached to some adventitious content; instead of, as normally, being generated by some content; that is, by the relevance or seeming relevance of some attitude (emotional, intellectual, or practical) to some given object, or, conversely, of some object to a given such attitude.

## The Mystic Trance and the Mystic Life

The mystic experience *par excellence*—to obtain which is the aim of the mystic's spiritual exercises—is the trance and in particular the ecstasy in which it culminates. Those mystics who come to it with theistic beliefs conceive the ecstasy as union with God. Psychologically, it seems to be essentially the same state which the Buddhists speak of, in nontheistic terms, as attainment of Nirvana, and as resulting from extinction of craving, ill will, and dulness. "Cosmic consciousness," as we have seen, is still another name for it. From the mystical experience, as Coe remarks, "each brings back confirmation of his own creed." The mystic "acquires his religious convictions precisely as his non-mystical neighbor does, namely, through tradition and instruction grown habitual, and reflective analysis. The mystic brings his theological beliefs to the mystical experience; he does not derive them from it." [24]

An emotional and also a noetic aspect are features both of the milder mystical states and of the ecstasy. In the latter, the emotion is that of intense and limitless love, and is correspondingly blissful in the highest degree. The noetic content ascribed to the experience varies, but ordinarily consists of one or another of the theological or metaphysical ideas which the mind of the particular mystic has been antecedently harboring, and in terms of which he has been conceiving the nature of the experience he sought. Often, however, the insight or illumination obtained are reported by the mystic to have been all-embracing.

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[24] G. A. Coe, "The Sources of the Mystic Revelation," *op. cit.*, pp. 360, 367.

The intensity of the love and bliss and of the conviction of insight is traceable at least in part to the trance condition in which the mystic is at the time; that is, to the fact that external sensory impressions are completely shut off, and distracting ideas completely absent. In respect to this double fact and to certain others, the mystic trance seems to be essentially the same sort of psychological state as the hypnotic trance, although the latter is ordinarily induced by another person, whereas the former is induced by the mystic himself, through mental concentration. It is a state of passivity, actively striven for and brought about by the mystic. Also, the emotional content of the hypnotic trance is ordinarily very different from that of the mystic trance. Yet, in the hypnotic trance, ecstatic states can be induced, as easily as any others, by appropriate suggestions.

Another feature of the mystic trance—probably traceable to the fact that it is induced by the mystic's own efforts—is that, as James points out, it is not an interruption of the stream of consciousness; it does not later constitute a gap in one's memories as on the contrary is the case with fainting, or with the mediumistic trance, or with the ordinary hypnotic trance if the hypnotist does not instruct his subject to remember. The various stages of the mystic trance, including its culminating ecstasy and noesis, are remembered notwithstanding that most of the noetic content of the experience is felt to have faded out or to be ineffable.

Further, the experiencing of the ecstasy tends to modify powerfully the mystic's subsequent estimate of the true values of life, and, in consequence, the attitudes he comes to have toward his work and his fellow-beings. Thus, when the ecstasy, as in the greater mystics, is that of intense and all-embracing love, it has ethical import and effects; and we may therefore refer to those mystics whose ecstasy is of this kind as "ethical" mystics. The fact that their whole life after the ecstasy is emotionally colored, and its activities shaped and energized, by the permanent impression the experience leaves behind, is termed by the theistic mystics—to the extent that it occurs—a "spiritual marriage" with God; and this "God-pervaded" subsequent life—the mystic life—is regarded by them as of greater importance than the ecstasy itself, which initiates the transformed conception of the values of life and the active self-dedication to them.

The attempts, which, after the ecstasy, the articulate mystics make to give an account of the truths into which they gained insight at the time, are always considered really unsuccessful by themselves as well as by their hearers. Although some of the mystics assert that the insight they experienced concerned truths of human science, as well as theological or metaphysical truths, the fact remains that no new scientific discoveries issue out of the mystical ecstasy. Ineffability somehow characterizes the assertedly scientific as well as the assertedly theological or metaphysical illuminations. The descriptions the mystics attempt to give of the content of their insight commonly tend to stress unity, divinity, infinity, beauty, felicity, and the like, as characteristics of "reality." But such accounts appear to be little else than subsequent rationalizations and projections of the nature of the emotional content, to wit, love and its bliss, and of its intensity and comprehensiveness. A phenomenon analogous to this, but milder and more common, is the projection of one's physiologically caused moods and feelings on to one's view of the environment. The feelings which go with youth, health, and vigor make optimists, who see life and the world in rosy colors.

Pessimism, on the contrary, and the picture of a world gloomy, cold and crushing, are begotten of feelings of fatigue, weakness, and inadequacy.

"Reality," moreover, as asserted of certain aspects of one's experience or of its objects, but denied of certain others, means, not *existence*, but *paramount value*. This is obvious in the instance of the man who declares: "Wine, women, and song! That is real life!" "Reality"—in this case, and similarly in that of the mystic's assertions as to the nature of Reality—is essentially not an existential but a value term; what it designates is the status, in respect to importance, which is *conferred* on an object or an experience by the fact that one finds in it, or attaches to it, more value than in, or to, any others. In the article already cited, Coe asks "where and how in the mystical experience the ontological certainties of mysticism arise"—i.e., its certainties as to the goodness, beauty, unity, divinity, etc., of Reality. As already noted above, he answers that the *content* of these certainties is not obtained from, but on the contrary is brought to, the mystic trance by the mystic; and he adds that the mystic's own belief that he obtains them from the trance is discredited—and this irrespective of the truth or falsity of the spiritual monism which is the typical content of those certainties—by the fact that his belief "accepts as immediate intuition what is palpably an interpretation." It is a belief—which may be sound or erroneous—as to what the mystical experience *means*, and not an analysis of its intrinsic nature, which is as ineffable as that of any other feeling. Coe remarks that "mystical confessions proceed, in general, from a homogeneous group of minds whose suggestibility is sufficient to give to ideas the force of present experience or intuition . . . Their suggestibility leads them to regard as actual experiences that which analysis shows to be only interpretations of experience. In this way, anything can become a 'direct perception of fact'!" [25]

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 362, 363.

In everyday life, of course, feelings or emotions in most cases have an object, namely, the thing, person, or situation which excites them and to which they are thus a response. But, as Santayana has justly remarked, "emotion is primarily about nothing, and much of it remains about nothing to the end." [26] Emotions, feelings, and moods in many cases well-up in us spontaneously from obscure subjective causes, bodily or psychical, instead of as responses to objects. A common example would be that of awaking some morning with a disinterested, *a priori*, objectless grouch—which, however, soon invents or finds for itself an object rationalizing the feeling. Similarly, the feelings called "conviction," or "insight," can be generated not only as responses to a coercive argument, or to an exhibition of facts, but, as we have seen, also, without these or any other objects, simply by inhalation of certain anesthetics and in other equally subjective ways. In such cases, the feeling, once generated, glues itself automatically—without discrimination—to any idea or object that happens to be psychologically at hand. Again, although love often occurs as response to a stimulating object, it also can and largely does rise up subjectively out of physiological causes and psychical needs; and then, not only in adolescence but even in maturity and old age, it dreams up for itself an object if no suitable one is encountered; and, as the slang term "dream boat" naïvely testifies, love then loads its dream object upon some poor vessel that happens to be in sight, which, made top-heavy by so taxing a burden, often tragically capsizes, spilling it overboard. The inventive and projective capacity of love —which is a plain fact of experience for innumerable persons —is a quite adequate psychological explanation also of the accounts in terms of "God as lover" and of "union with God," which theistic mystics give of what they experienced in the ecstasy.

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[26] George Santayana, "Reason in Art," *The Life of Reason* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 56.

In the penetrating article cited above, Coe refers to Starbuck's contention that feeling and ideation are two different means that give "reports," "accounts," "hints," and "intimations" not only of organic processes, but also of environing conditions; and that religion is a feeling-adjustment to the larger reality that encompasses the personal life, so that religious feeling as such contains objective content.[27] Coe, however, points out that such affective responses to our environment, for instance, to the weather, become really significant only when we are able to state what specifically they are signs of, and to verify that they are in fact, not merely in fancy, signs of it—for instance, signs that school children will become restless, or that the suicide-rate will go up, etc.

The most telling instances that could be adduced in support of Starbuck's contention that feeling sometimes has cognitive import would be those of the imaginative kind of self-identification with an object which German estheticians have called *Einfuehlung* and which Titchener termed Empathy. For example, by identifying one's self imaginatively with the posture, the gestures, the facial expression, the tone of voice, or the gait of a person one observes, one more or less accurately reproduces minimally in one's self and intuits the feeling, the mood, and the psychological attitude which subjectively go with these various forms of objective behavior. This is a way of knowing the subjective state of the person under observation which is different from that of inferring it from learned external signs of it. Obviously, it is subject to errors even when the object empathized is another human being; but, when it is practiced on inanimate objects—for instance on the wailing of the wind as one would on the wailing of a human voice, etc.—it seems fair to say that one is then gratuitously and illusorily animating the inanimate, instead of, as in the case of empathy of persons, experiencing more or less accurately the mood and attitude of animate beings, by imaginative self-projection into them. At all events, if it is claimed by anyone that empathy of the inanimate yields not mere illusion but genuinely perception, evidence independent of the empathy itself, that would vindicate that claim, is needed. But it is not offered.

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[27] Coe, "The Sources of the Mystic Revelation," *op. cit.*, p. 369.

## The Cultivation of Ecstatic States

The trances referred to in what precedes have been primarily those of mystics whose ecstasy had the feeling of love as its dominant emotional tone and therefore naturally tended to infuse altruism into the active life following the experience. But, in trances or in conditions resembling trance in some respects, states of consciousness can be obtained that have a different emotional tone and hence a different putative noetic import; and that have no specifically ethical influence on the subsequent life of action. Yet, these states can be genuinely ecstatic in various degrees.

Etymologically, being in ecstasy means standing outside one's self, being beside one's self; and Coe mentions that a feature common to the accounts mystics give of their ecstatic experiences is indeed that, in them, "the limits of the individual self are transcended through some kind of mingling in, or other immediate realisation of, a larger world of the spiritual order; that this larger reality is good, and that in it the contradictions and the mystery of existence are solved." [28]

The self, out of which the ecstasy takes the person experiencing it, is the everyday humdrum little self which, in moments of sober reflection, a man sees with much the same cool eyes as those of external observers of it—a small being, confronted by dull and difficult tasks, worried by doubts of his adequacy to them, conscious of his weakness, haunted by fears and by his failures to live up to his ideals and potentialities. In ecstasy, on the other hand, this anxious, petty and unsure

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 360.

self is left behind with the world in which it lives. There occurs, as Leuba points out, a subsiding of the external sensations and of the activities of reason; there comes a sense of enlargement of one's being, a feeling of free life, unlimited vision and easy power; and sometimes there is, besides this, visions, or consciousness, whether real or illusory, of exercise of paranormal faculties such as clairvoyance, prevision of coming events, and the like.[29]

Now there are ways, other than the orisons or other strenuous spiritual exercises of the ethical mystics, of putting aside for a time the tense little work-a-day self, and of gaining the rapturous sense of ease, expansion, and assurance characteristic of ecstatic states. There are physical means—chiefly drugs of various kinds, but often also, together with them, wild music, breathless dancing, rapid whirling, or other frenzied physical activity—which bring about that result, or something approaching it more or less. Taylor, in a recent book, *Flight from Reality*, asserts that in practically all times and places, men generally—other than the few "safely anchored to the security of smugness . . . for whom reality is far from difficult" —have found life tolerable only with the occasional aid of some drug or other that brings a moment's or an hour's respite from reality and fills it with "a bit of heaven on earth." [30] For them at the time, of course, the use of those drugs is not a flight *from*, but much rather *to*, Reality if, as indicated earlier, Reality is in such contexts essentially a value-term rather than an existential term. For the drug user, that which the flight reaches is "Reality" precisely in that it is a bit of *heaven*—a bit of the happiness of ecstasy.

Alcohol obviously is one of those drugs, and others of the better known, mild, and, in moderation, practically harmless ones are coffee, tea, and tobacco. Another, of more evil repute, is Indian hemp, popularly known as marijuana or hashish—the latter name and also the word "assassin" possibly being, as Taylor suggests, derived from Hashishin, which was the full name of Hasan, founder and leader of the eleventh century sect, the Assassins, dedicated to purging the Moslem world of false prophets by murder. Some other such blissful intoxicants are opium, the ololiuqui of Southern Mexico, the peyotl of the northern part, the coca leaf of Peru, the pituri of Australia. The names of modern derivatives from these or other products of the plant kingdom—morphine, cocaine, heroin, etc.—are as familiar today as are the disastrous effects on the human body and mind of the addiction which so easily results from recourse to those drugs in search of the brief moments of bliss they bring.

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[29] Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, *op. cit.*, chap. ii, *passim.*

[30] Norman Taylor, *Flight from Reality* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1949), pp. 12, 16, 24, 25.

Leuba, who, in the chapter mentioned above, discusses at some length the peculiarities of a number of those physical means of ecstasy, notes that "both among savage and civilized peoples, states of ecstatic intoxication are regarded as the culmination of man's commerce with a superhuman world"; and he asks, "Why this association?"

He does not think that a sufficient answer is provided by the usual belief that "ecstasy brings superhuman powers such as healing, making rain, destroying enemies, forecasting the future, controlling spirits, and the like." Some students of the subject, it is true, "are satisfied when they have described . . . [ecstatic] states as divine possession or union"; but, Leuba rightly insists, "nothing is thereby explained, unless first the meaning of these expressions be set forth in concrete detail; for, the term 'divine' in itself throws no light upon these facts. It is the reverse; *'divine' gets whatever significance it may possess from the experiences to which it is applied.*"[31]

The significance with which those experiences endow that word consists in the positive and exalted value-features, which we listed above as belonging to the state of the self in ecstasy when we contrasted it with the state of the dull, everyday self: a "divine" state *means* any state having those value-features. And the causes, whether perceived or only postulated, of such a state derive the divineness ascribed to them from the intrinsic and literal divineness—i.e., from the peace, the assurance, and the bliss—of the state itself.

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[31] Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism, op. cit.*, pp. 16, 18.

The means which those mystics we have termed ethical have employed to induce the trance and to open their souls to advent of its culminating ecstasy are very different from the drugs through recourse to which men have so widely sought an easy way to ecstatic moments. It is to asceticism and strenuous "spiritual exercises" that the mystics have turned.

The word "asceticism" commonly brings to mind a variety of more or less painful practices, to which it is well known that some ascetics deliberately subject themselves—not only that of fasting or of foregoing sleep for shorter or longer periods, or of flagellation, or of wearing a hair shirt, but even such extremes as that of lying on a bed of nails or holding up an arm until it withers. But, as history tells us that Gotama discovered after having himself engaged in severe austerities, the suffering they cause has in itself no virtue. They are of value only in that they require and promote development of a strong will. For this, however, more moderate exercises, harmless to the body and often of positive value for its health or for performance of one's external duties, are no less effective. In one of its senses, the Greek word ἀσκητικός, from which "ascetic" is derived, means trained, practiced, athletic; and the word "athletic" comes from ἀθλητής, which similarly means one who is practiced or skilled in, or master of, something. Essentially, then, an ascetic is an *athlete of the will.*

The true *raison d'être* of the mystic's austerities, whether extreme or moderate, is thus not to mortify, chastise, or weaken the body, but to exercise and so develop the will that not only his actions from moment to moment, but also the contents of his consciousness, shall no longer be at the mercy of external temptations and distractions, or of adventitious internal impulses; but shall at any time be such as, for the pursuit of his spiritual aims, he decides that they should be. The body, the natural impulses, the feelings, are neither to be crushed nor wantonly denied, but only to be mastered instead of allowed to rule thought and behavior. Like a man's horse or his dog, they are to be kept in health, but to be trained into instruments obedient to their master's will and efficient for his purposes.

The first step in the mystic discipline consists in the deliberate self-dedication to pursuit of spiritual instead of worldly values, which occurs when he has once awakened to the nature and to the importance of each as compared with the other.

The second step, which is the direct and natural fruit of such self-dedication, is the faithful practice of the ordinary moral virtues in the dealings the mystic has with his fellow-beings. These virtues, however, are now viewed by him no longer as forms of conduct demanded by them, but much rather simply as the most elementary expression, and the most commonly effective means of promotion, of the spiritual aims to which he has himself freely chosen to devote his life.

The third step in the discipline consists of the "spiritual exercises" which, under various names and specific forms, are so prominent a practice of the mystics of all faiths. All three of those steps indeed—each with subdivisions—are to be discerned not only, as we have seen, in the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism, but, in one version or another, likewise in Christian, in Mohammedan, and in Hindu mysticism. They pertain not exclusively to any one religion, but to the very essence of religious mysticism.

Of the three steps, the third is the most esoteric, and something must be said to elucidate its psychological nature.

In a comparative study of the rules and techniques of the art of winning to the mystical ecstasy, which are employed in the four faiths just mentioned, Tillyard gives, as elements which, in one form or another, may be discerned in the spiritual exercises of each of them, the following:

> 1) A certain definite posture, 2) The regulation of the breath. In Christian meditations the quieting of the emotions, 3) The banishing of intruding thoughts. 4) Concentration 5) The repeating of a sacred sentence.[32]

The reason for adoption of a particular posture is at least twofold. For one thing, a close association quickly becomes established between the posture adopted and the occupying of the mind with prayer or religious meditation, so that, when the posture is taken, sheer force of habit automatically induces the prayerful or meditative mood. Again, a posture that is easy to maintain and yet not indolent frees the mind both from need to give attention to the body, and from having to fight off drowsiness. In addition, it might be that, as the Hindu yogis believe, certain postures—in particular, their favorite cross-legged seat, with head and spine erect and the gaze concentrated on the root of the nose—are somehow inherently favorable to development of the trance condition or of some of its particular phases.

For regulation of breathing, the most obvious reason is the connection between one's emotional states and one's manner of breathing. When emotionally agitated, one's breathing is agitated also; and, when breathing hard or spasmodically, as one does after running or other physical exertion, calm and steady thinking is for the time being impossible. But, conversely, quiet, regular, easy breathing tends to calm thoughts and feelings; also, it is easy to observe for one's self that, if one attempts to concentrate attention without wavering on some single thought or feeling, breathing automatically tends to become momentarily suspended or at least very shallow.

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[32] Aelfrida Tillyard, *Spiritual Exercises and Their Results* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 15.

That certain abnormal modes of breathing may be intimately related to certain abnormal psychical states is indicated by, for example, Swedenborg's report that, when engaged in what he conceived to be communion with spirits, he hardly breathed at all for many minutes. Again, Price reports that the medium Rudi Schneider, as well as his brother Willi, breathed during trance both deeply, "like a steam engine," and at the extraordinary rate of some 200 cycles a minute; and he states: "I have known Rudi continue this hard breathing, interspersed with spasms and the usual clonic movements, *for seventy-five minutes without cessation*." [33]

That control of the breath may be of some service for control of one's mental and emotional state is thus plausible enough; but the connection between the two, evident in the instances noticed, hardly suffices to account for the elaborate breathing exercises practiced by Hindu yogis and Mohammedan Sufis. Two suggestions have been made to justify them. One is that breathing is the only bodily process which, although normally automatic, is also capable, within limits, of being voluntarily controlled; and that attention to and voluntary shaping of it constitutes as it were the Ariadne's thread by following which the yogi gradually acquires control at will over heartbeat, peristalsis, and various other autonomous activities not ordinarily amenable to such control. The other suggestion is connected with the Hindu hypothesis of *Prana*, which is perhaps best conceived as ambient life or vitality. It is supposed to be drawn into the body with the breath, and it is thought that if the breath is retained this *Prana* may then be consciously directed by the will to certain parts of the body where it awakens the *chakras*, i.e., organs of latent spiritual sight, hearing, and other paranormal faculties reported to be sometimes acquired by mystics.[34]

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[33] Harry Price, *Rudi Schneider* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 107; and *Fifty Years of Psychical Research* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1939), p. 98.

The banishing of intruding thoughts is, of course, a necessary preliminary to concentration of attention upon a chosen object. The two are related virtually as the negative and positive aspects of one process. Withdrawal of attention from the impressions of the senses, and from the fancies and words which surge up adventitiously in the mind, is both necessary to and best effected by intense positive effort to attend to a chosen object of thought.

Concentration is at first discursive, i.e., it is simply the attempt, familiar to everyone, to keep the attention to a particular topic; as, for example, when one is attempting to solve a mathematical problem, he tries to exclude any thought not relevant to it. In the mystic's discursive meditation, however, the topic of concentration is one chosen by himself for the purpose of the exercise, rather than, as in ordinary life, one that external circumstances thrust upon the individual.

When the mystic has gained control over discursive thought, he then attempts unwavering contemplation of some idea, image, or feeling. Tillyard describes this as "hypnotic" meditation, rightly emphasizing as does Coe that the state it achieves is psychologically the same as that of ordinary hypnosis in that the ordinary channels of sense impression are closed and increased suggestibility obtained; but that in the mystic's case this state is induced by himself instead of by another person, and that the mental content he steadily contemplates is chosen likewise by himself and is of a spiritual nature. It is, for example, some religious symbol vividly imaged, or some *mantra*—some religiously pregnant word, sentence, or scriptural text—instead of, as often in heterohypnosis, some meaningless shining metal object or monotonous sound. In either auto- or heterohypnosis, the result is not sleep as the word hypnosis would suggest, except perhaps in appearance to an external observer, or unless an auto- or heterosuggestion of slumber has been specifically given. The hypnotized person, on the contrary, is likely to be conscious with a vividness proportional to the narrowness of the content of his consciousness.

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[34] Cf. *Raja Yoga*, by Swami Vivekananda (New York: Baker & Taylor Co., 1899), pp. 132 ff.

The culminating effort of the meditating mystic is—when one-pointed, unwavering contemplation has been achieved—to drop the content being contemplated and yet maintain one-pointed but now expectant attentiveness; that is, to "listen for" whatever mystic illumination or ecstasy may then vouchsafe itself, or be vouchsafed by God, to his strenuously intent mental receptiveness.

## The Values of Mystical Experience

Whereas the use of drugs to induce mystical or quasi-mystical states of consciousness often damages or wrecks both the body and the personality of the user, the spiritual exercises employed by the religious mystics—whether termed more specifically "prayer," "orison," "meditation," "contemplation," or something else—tend to have the opposite effect in all but pathological cases.

In the preceding chapter, attention was called to the beneficial subjective results of ordinary prayer, testified to by one of Pratt's correspondents and verifiable by anyone for himself who prays otherwise than perfunctorily. Mention was also made both of normal and of possible exceptional somatic effects of beneficial kinds, which prayer can have. The mystics' more strenuous spiritual exercises have results of the same kinds and likely to be more marked. The ecstasy in particular, if obtained, is reported by the mystics to color, in greater or less degree but for the better, their entire subsequent life. It leaves behind an assurance, an altruism, a serenity, and an energy for dedicated work which outweighs in objective value the brief ecstatic climax of the mystic trance.

Various paranormal faculties—the power of prophecy, of healing the sick, of perceiving the thoughts of men and distant events, etc.—have been asserted also to manifest themselves often in the course of the mystic's development. Mystical teachings, however, have tended to deprecate any attempt to win such powers, or to display them, as likely to distract the mystic from his essential aim and to foster in him the personal pride he should eliminate. The question of the reality or illusoriness of such paranormal powers, however, is one on which we cannot enter here both because the task of assessing the evidence is far too extensive for the space at our disposal, and because the association between mysticism and such powers seems to be incidental since they have frequently been reported to be possessed by persons who were not mystics in the sense we have been discussing.

We shall therefore content ourselves with noting here some highly interesting remarks by Pratt, which would be relevant to such paranormal faculties in mystics as well as to the ineffable insights the mystics assert they obtain in the trance—the latter being what Pratt specifically has in mind when, in his chapter on "The Place and Value of Mysticism," he considers the three leading views as to the origin and nature of the mystic revelation.[35]

According to the first, which is the view of the theistic mystics themselves, the soul, in the ecstasy, "comes face to face with God and receives from God revelations, comfortings, assistance which it can carry back into the world for the help of all the faithful . . . the contact of the soul with the Supernatural realm in the mystic union is regarded as more or less miraculous."

The second view, on the other hand, is completely naturalistic. It holds either that no supernatural realm exists, or that, if one does exist, it never intrudes in the realm of Nature. Hence, the experiences of the mystics are to be explained solely in terms of the factors that figure in the laws of scientific psychology.

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[35] Pratt, *op. cit.*, chap. xx, pp. 442–45.

The third view attempts to combine or compromise between the first two views. It holds that the so-called "supernatural" is but another, as yet little known, part of Nature; is just as much a realm of law as the part which the natural sciences study; and is somehow continuous therewith. What mystical experiences are on this view can be most briefly put in the words of James' suggestion that they are "windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world." This possibility, Pratt argues, is seen to be perfectly compatible with the psychological explanation of mystical states which the second view insists on, if one but notices what constitutes "naturalistic explanation."

The point of his remarks as to this may be put briefly and in terms slightly different from his, by saying that naturalistic explanation of the occurrence of any given state of consciousness essentially consists in finding some antecedent somatic or psychical event which stands to the given state in a causal relation; i.e., which is such that when and only when it occurs does a state of consciousness of the given kind occur. A causal connection, however, is essentially a three-term relationship; i.e., it is always of the form: An event of kind B invariably follows from an event of kind A *under circumstances of kind C*. This entails that, if we are not in position to know and to vary a certain circumstance C of the occurrence of B, and it happens to remain constantly present, then we cannot possibly discover that its presence is *necessary* to causation of B by A; i.e., that A is not, *by itself*, sufficient to cause B, but only when C is present.

Pratt illustrates the bearing of this on the possibility mentioned in the quoted words of James by asking us to imagine human beings constantly played upon by light, but, except a few of them, blind; or we should rather say, incapable of opening their eyes. If, then, one of the few capable of doing it reported seeing colors and various objects, he would be told, and quite correctly, by the psychologists among his blind fellows, that his visions are caused simply by his act of raising his eyelids. That this is the cause of them, they would insist, is proved, in conformity with the experimental method of Single Difference, by the fact that if he merely raises the eyelids he always has visions, and that they always disappear if he but closes his eyes. This, of course, would be perfectly true; and yet it would *also* be true—although undiscoverable by his blind fellows—that opening the lids causes him to see sights only because light is constantly present and because he is surrounded by objects which reflect the light into his eyes whenever he opens them.

Analogously, it may be supposed that a realm other than that revealed by the ordinary senses exists and constantly surrounds all of us; and that inducing certain abnormal states, such as the mystic trance, is the very sort of act which enables the mind to perceive that other realm. The present writer inclines to believe that this supposition has considerable merit.

# Chapter 15

## GODS

In what has preceded, we had many occasions to employ the word God, either in the plural or in the singular. In Chapter 4, a first analysis of its meaning was offered, which it is now necessary to recall and to amplify.

According to it—and irrespective of whether or not any god or gods exist—a *god*, and likewise a *demon*, is (*a*) a supernatural being; but (*b*) a god differs from a demon in that beneficent traits predominate in a god, whereas in a demon maleficent ones are dominant. By a "supernatural" being is meant, more specifically, a being conceived as having the following three characteristics:

1) It is not accessible to public observation, and therefore its nature and existence are not actually perceived, but only conceived, imagined, or perhaps "revealed." Hence such beings may be only imaginary; but it is also possible that they are real.

2) A supernatural being is not material; rather, it is essentially "spiritual" or "psychical" in the sense that, whether or not materially embodied, it is capable of perceiving, thinking, feeling, willing; has dispositions and purposes; and is able to cause at will various effects in the bodies or minds of men and in the external world. Or at least, a supernatural being possesses some if not all of these capacities.

3) Although humanlike in its possession of such psychical faculties, a supernatural being is nevertheless superhuman in the sense that such of them as it possesses transcend the limitations of the similar human capacities. It can, for example,

see things which are hidden from human eyes, and do things which are beyond human power.

The beneficence of gods or the maleficence of demons is conceived by men for the most part anthropocentrically. Hence it would probably be more accurate to say that a god is a supernatural being conceived as on the whole friendly of intent toward man, or at least toward those men whose god he is, and friendly also in action so long as he is obeyed, adulated, supplicated, sacrificed to, etc.; whereas a demon is a supernatural being conceived as essentially mean of intent, but for whose aid in sinful designs it is possible to bargain by offering vows of allegiance and promise of sacrifices. Adulation, on the other hand, seems to play relatively little part in devil worship—perhaps because the Devil is conceived as too intelligent and cynical to be moved by anything so crude as praise of him!

With an idea, thus reasonably definite, of the least which seems to be meant by the words "god" and "demon," we are now in position to ask how gods and demons come to be thought of and believed to exist.

### How the Idea of Supernatural Beings Arises

The statement sometimes met with in works on religion, that the gods are social creations objectifying the ideals of the community, is true at most in an elliptical sense; for after all, only individuals literally have or are minds, and it is always in some one or other of these minds that a novel idea originates or an invention is excogitated. Thus, what is true in the statement just alluded to is only that, when the individual makes public by word or action some new idea which arose in his mind, the reaction of his fellows to it is what determines the social fate of the idea. It determines whether the idea—having among them no general appeal and therefore being ignored—will be socially still-born; or whether on the contrary, being acceptable to the other members of the group, it will spread and live on among them—getting, however, modified in the process until it reaches a form socially stable, in which it is then passed on to later generations.

To explain the sense in which it is true that the gods are social creations thus leaves still to be answered the question as to the nature of the conditions, subjective and objective, likely to give birth in a human mind to the idea of supernatural beings and to belief in their existence. There would seem to be several different ways in which such an idea and belief can arise.

One of them, already mentioned in connection with our discussions of prayer, is that if a man's spontaneous utterance of a fervent wish seemingly brings about fulfilment of the wish but does this mysteriously, i.e., somehow otherwise than, as normally, by moving some other human being to act to fulfil it, then in the natural mind (which is *not* a "naturalistic" mind) the idea will inevitably arise that some agent exists, capable like a man of understanding words, but invisible and capable of acting somehow otherwise than with hands; and that such an agent heard the wish uttered and was moved to fulfil it.

This mode of origination of the idea of, and of belief in, a god relates primarily to the life of the individual as such, but of course, if the wish concerned arises out of an objective situation that is patently of moment to all the members of a group, the same wish will exist in and be uttered by many of them; and, if fulfilment of it then follows, the idea of, and the belief in, a supernatural agent of fulfilment will arise alike in the minds of all, and thus be shared *ab initio*; and the god postulated will thus be a tribal or national god rather than a private familiar spirit.

But either an individual alone, or perhaps oftener, all the members of a group at the same time, may in another manner be caused to imagine and believe in the existence of a supernatural being. In the sort of cases just considered, it was the otherwise unexplained fulfilment of a wish, that gave birth to the idea; but sometimes it is instead the presence and obstinacy of a threat to precious values. Such arresting external occurrences as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, storms, floods, droughts, plagues, and so on, unmistakably threaten or destroy things of vital concern to man—usually to many men at once; but the natural causes of such events are anything but obvious to minds scientifically uninformed and untrained. In such minds, the notion of impersonal, invariable connection between an event of a given kind and a cause of some specific other kind, does not extend farther than to recognition of the more obvious causal properties of the more familiar kinds of objects—for instance, that heat regularly causes wax to melt and water to boil, that water quenches fire and dissolves salt and sugar, etc. Hence, at the prescientific level, unpredictable external events are inevitably interpreted after the analogy of the unpredictable actions of men, namely, as effects of the free volitions of a consciously purposive being—in such cases, of a being both invisible and superhumanly potent.

There are situations, however, in which the idea of such a being does not arise, as in the cases already considered, out of the need for an explanation, but in a nonintellectual, automatic, much more direct, and compelling manner; and this then equally in minds scientifically trained and in those not so trained; although in the former, belief of what is so imagined is not likely to endure for more than the moment. That manner of generation is the psychological process, already referred to in the preceding chapter, called "empathy"; that is, a person's spontaneous imaginative self-identification with an object which for the moment has totally captured his attention.

William James, for instance, in describing his personal experience of the 1906 California earthquake—which occurred after a friend had expressed to him the hope that California would stage an earthquake during his visit there—speaks of "certain peculiar ways in which my consciousness had taken in the phenomenon. These ways were quite spontaneous, and, so to speak, inevitable and irresistible." First, he says, "I personified the earthquake as a permanent individual entity . . . Animus and intent were never more present in any human action, nor did any human activity ever more definitely point back to a living agent as its source and origin. All whom I consulted on the point agreed as to this feature in their experience. 'It expressed intention,' 'It was vicious,' 'It was bent on destruction,' 'It wanted to show its power.'" James adds that, although for science the earthquake is the disturbances themselves which occur in the earth's crust, nevertheless, for him at the time, the earthquake was "the *cause* of the disturbances, and the perception of it as a living agent was irresistible. It had an overpowering dramatic convincingness." And he remarks: "I realize now better than ever how inevitable were men's earlier mythologic versions of such catastrophes." [1]

Again the present writer still remembers his own vivid feeling, while in dangerous places on a high mountain many years ago, that gravitation was insistently and ingeniously attempting to "get" him; and, years later, a similarly clear feeling of a hurricane's obstinate and redoubled efforts to lay flat a great tree, which he was watching. In such cases, the forces one observes in action are apperceived quite automatically as purposive, relentless, bent on achieving an aim; and what is psychologically difficult at those moments, even for a scientifically educated person, is to reject the idea.

In this connection, it is interesting to note how easily and fully so eminent a scientist as Herschel yielded to the temptation to anthropomorphize natural forces. He holds *both* that the cause of motion in inanimate nature is force, *and* that the forces of nature are never directly observable but are only inferred from their effects, by analogy to the human will as fact of consciousness; and he writes: "Of force, as counterbalanced by opposing force, we have . . . an internal consciousness; and though it may seem strange to us that matter should be capable of exerting on matter the same kind of effort, which, judging alone from this consciousness, we might be led to regard as a mental one; yet we cannot refuse the direct evidence of our senses, which shows us that when we keep a spring stretched with one hand, we feel our effort opposed in exactly the same way as if we had ourselves opposed it with the other hand." [2]

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[1] William James, *Memories and Studies* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc.), copyright 1911, by Henry James, Jr., pp. 212–14.

In this passage, it is evident that exertion of force in the sense meant in Physics is confused with the kinesthetic sensations experienced by a human being when that which exerts force happens to be the muscles of his body.[3] But the interesting point is that, if Herschel's train of thought in that passage were cogent, it would entail some form of animism, if not of panpsychism.

Still another psychological situation must be listed here which, as pointed out earlier in connection with prayers of confession and of communion, easily generates in minds of certain types the idea of a god and the belief that one exists. It is the sort of situation where an intensely felt subjective need for an all-understanding friend, confidant, comforter, and wise counselor, begets the idea that an invisible such being exists and is ever at hand. This is a particular instance of what is called wishful thinking—the sort of situation where the wish is father to the thought.

That a belief is born of a wish is of course no evidence whatever that it is true; nor of course, as we noted earlier, is it evidence that it is false. In the present section, however, we have been concerned only with the subjective and objective kinds of factors that cause men to imagine gods and to believe that such exist. Whether there are rational grounds, as distinguished from psychological causes, for that belief is a different question, to be considered later.

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[2] Sir J. F. W. Herschel, *Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy* (London: Longman, Cabinet Cyclopedia, 1831), Sec. 81.

[3] A detailed criticism of the passage quoted may be found in C. J. Ducasse, *Nature, Mind, and Death* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 142–45.

### A Tibetan Conception of the Reality and Power of Gods and Demons

The well-known traveler and student of Tibet, Mme Alexandra David-Neel, mentions a certain conception, accepted by some of the more enlightened Tibetan lamas, as to the nature and existence of gods and demons, and as to the reality and source of their powers. It is peculiar and interesting enough to be worth describing here, and is analogous to a conception hinted at even if not fully made explicit in a passage, to which Mme David-Neel refers, in one of the Hindu Upanishads, and which reads: "Now if a man worships a deity, thinking the deity is one and he another, he is ignorant. He is like a beast for the Devas [i.e., the deities]. For verily, as many beasts nourish a man, thus does every man nourish the Devas. If only one beast is taken away, it is not pleasant; how much more when many are taken! Therefore it is not pleasant to the Devas that men should know this" [and because of knowing it, cease to nourish them by worship].[4]

In describing the *doubthabs* rituals, which aim at the obtaining of good fortune or of magical power over other persons, Mme David-Neel mentions several explanations current in Tibet of the efficacy those rituals are believed to have. Some think that the results obtained are the work of the deities whose aid is devoutly invoked in the ritual. Others believe that the ritual is not worship but rather aims to gain mastery over the gods and demons, whom the expert celebrant can then compel to do his bidding. But the more learned lamas hold a somewhat different opinion. They believe that the deities invoked in the ritual are in fact mental images vividly visualized by the celebrant; but that, instead of being arbitrary ones, they are images of traditional gods or demons, which have been similarly dwelt upon, venerated, and sacrificed to, by millions of believers through the centuries; and that, as a result of this, those images and their imagined powers, though created by the imagination of men, have acquired an independent, objective, real though not tangible existence, much as, in the tangible world, a machine, though created by an inventor, then exists independently of him and has powers of its own which are greater than his, but which he can call upon for his purposes.[5]

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[4] *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* I, 4. 10.

To pursue this comparison, which, although not made by Mme David-Neel, seems faithful to the essence of the conception she describes, one might then say that the features of the ritual—offerings, acts of veneration, invocations, prayers, etc.—are, in the case of the man-created spiritual machines called gods and demons, the exact analogues of what, in the case of, for example, the material machine called an automobile, would be the "offerings" of gasoline and oil, the "veneration" consisting of periodical polishing and repair, the "invocation" consisting of pushing the starter button, and the "prayers" consisting of pressing the accelerator and turning the steering wheel for the speed one wishes to go and the direction one desires to travel!

Some support would be lent to the idea—fantastic to us—that a voluntarily created mental image diligently and persistently labored at may acquire in some degree an existence independent of its creator's mind, if we were to accept an experiment which Mme David-Neel relates she once made to test for herself the assertions to that effect current among the lamas. She chose, arbitrarily, as mental image to work at, one figuring a stout, short lama, guileless and jovial. After a few months of work at this image it was completely formed and the lama imaged became a sort of companion. He appeared to her at times when her mind was occupied with quite other matters. She states that the hallucination was mostly visual, but occasionally tactual, as of the lama's hand being felt on her shoulder; and she makes it a point to mention that she was in robust health at the time, camping, and riding horseback every day.

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[5] Alexandra David-Neel, *Initiations Lamaiques,* Editions Adyar (Paris: 1947), pp. 102–6. See also the same author, *Mystiques et Magiciens du Thibet* (Paris: Plon, 1929), pp. 130 ff.

But now comes the more interesting part: "A change gradually took place in my lama. The countenance I had given him altered; his chubby cheeks thinned and his expression became vaguely cunning and malevolent. He became more importunate. In short, he was escaping me. One day, a shepherd who was bringing me butter *saw the phantasm*, which he took for a lama of flesh and bone."

The situation, by then, was getting on Mme David-Neel's nerves, so, she goes on, "I decided to dissipate the hallucination, over which I did not have complete mastery. I succeeded, but only after working at it for six months. My lama was hard to kill. That I should have succeeded in obtaining a voluntary hallucination is not surprising. What is interesting in such cases of 'materialization' is that other persons see the form created by thought." [6]

## Polytheism, Pantheism, Monotheism

The idea of supernatural beings, which easily occurs to human minds in situations of the kinds described in the first section of the present chapter, has in the history of mankind been elaborated in a variety of ways. Polytheism is the most natural of them and has been the most widespread form of theism. It is the belief that there are more or less numerous gods, who have dominion over different peoples or regions of the world, or have different special attributes and functions. This is a natural and easy form of theistic belief because it is so like the state of affairs observable among human beings, where one man has power, political or other, in a given region or over a small or large group; or where a given man, being expert in one or another of the practical arts—medicine, law, architecture, war, etc.—is consulted, obeyed, and sacrificed to, i.e., paid, by other men who lack the specialized knowledge or skill he possesses but need the practical guidance it affords or the benefits it can bring them.

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[6] David-Neel, *Mystiques et Magiciens du Thibet, op. cit.*, pp. 299–300 (italics supplied).

Polytheism has itself taken a variety of forms. The gods have been conceived sometimes anthropomorphically, sometimes theriomorphically, and sometimes in forms partly human and partly animal. Sometimes the gods have been thought of as relatively few, as in the religions of Greece and Rome and of some of the African tribes; and sometimes as existing in extravagant profusion; for instance in India where, besides accepting, like other persons, the great gods of the Vedas, the superstitious ignorant postulate little and special godlets at the slightest provocation.[7] Especially in the more luxuriant polytheisms, however, a line between gods and demons is often quite as hard to draw as would be one between good and bad men. Also, there are often spirits, such as angels or saints, or departed heroes, chiefs, and ancestors, whose status in point of divineness is somewhat ambiguous. For they are thought of as having some superhuman powers, either inherently or as agents of a god; or as capable of interceding with a god on behalf of supplicants; and prayers and offerings are made to certain of these spiritual beings.

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[7] Paul Dare's *Indian Underworld* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1940) is interesting reading in this general connection. The author was for a number of years editor of the *Times of India*, and this, together with his strong interest in anthropology, brought to his notice many strange superstitions, and some equally strange facts.

If one regards as possible, and assumes as actual, the existence of spiritual beings not embodied, or at least not physically embodied, then the supposition that some of them are superhuman in a variety of degrees and of respects becomes exceedingly plausible. Even carrying the idea but a little way, it would then be reasonable to suppose, for instance, that our earth has a god of its own; our solar system, another god, greater in some respects and with functions more or less different; our galaxy, a still greater; and metagalaxies, if there are such, each a "metatheos."

Such a train of thought, moreover, does not, as some would think, lead with logical necessity to postulation of a supreme, all-encompassing god. For one thing, there is no logical reason why such a hierarchy, if it should be a fact, could not be infinite, i.e., like the series of the whole numbers, be without a last term. Rejection of this possibility *a priori* is based on no better premise than that there cannot be an infinity because it quickly makes one tired to try to imagine more and still more and always still more. Reasoning from such a premise is like arguing that a road on which one has been walking does not go beyond a certain point because one is too weary to walk any farther!

The idea of a supreme cosmic ruler derives psychologically from the days of absolute monarchies on earth—illogically ignoring the fact that the absolute monarchs were several, were often in conflict with one another, and were never organized in an all-inclusive empire; and that such partial empires as did arise were, like the absolute monarchies themselves, only temporary.

If there are gods, then—to say nothing of devils—their relations to one another in the cosmos may be of any one or more kinds. For example, feudal, with common allegiance to a king of the gods—such allegiance conditional perhaps on observance of the terms of a cosmic *magna charta.* Again, although the gods might each have greater power than any beings in his own dominions, yet particular gods might be contending for power with one another, might have relations of friendship or alliance with certain other gods, and might have no contact at all with yet others. But the relations among the gods could just as easily be those which obtain in a democracy; and a democracy among gods might well be as messy, even if on a bigger scale and at a higher level, as the democracies, or indeed the monarchies, oligarchies, or other polities, which exist among men.

It is interesting to note that a hint of a conception in which such cosmic rulers as there may be are essentially office-holders, with limited tenure and powers, rather than sovereigns, is to be found in a Buddhist text referred to by Pratt, who writes: "In §22 of the Iti-vuttaka . . . the Buddha is represented as saying that he himself once occupied the position of the great Brahmā, and that he had been Sakka, ruler of the gods, thirty-six times. It was and is the Indian conception (or *an* Indian conception) that different individuals occupy the position of Brahma and of each of the gods. The name of a god thus is really a title, the name of an office, rather than the appellation of an individual." [8]

Whatever might be the form of political system obtaining among such gods as there may be, and however naïve some polytheisms have been, the fact remains that polytheism not only is a *prima facie* more plausible and less vague form of theism than are the current monotheisms, but also is free from the contradictions arising from the existence of evil, which are inherent in orthodox monotheism, and which have led its theologians to such extraordinary logical contortions in their vain attempts to reconcile evil with the postulated goodness and omnipotence of their God.

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[8] J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 6.

Pantheism, according to which God is all that exists, has like polytheism taken a variety of more specific forms. In one of them, found in India, God alone is real, and the world is *Maya,* i.e., illusion, or the dream of Brahma. In Plotinus, individual souls and material objects proceed from the One, God, by a series of emanations, and matter, which has no real being, is conceived as the darkness into which the form-giving light pours. Giordano Bruno, in somewhat similar fashion, thinks of God as the original and immanent cause of the world, which God freely, i.e., by an inner necessity, caused to issue from himself. God then is present in things in the sense in which beauty, for instance, is present in beautiful things. Spinoza likewise speaks of God as the immanent, not the external or transient, cause of all things, asserting with Paul that in God all things live and move, but denying that God, and Nature in the sense of corporeal matter, are one and the same. Toland, who originated the word "pantheist," describes pantheism as belief that God is the ordering and creative power active everywhere in the world. In Haeckel's monism, mind and matter are two inseparable aspects of everything there is, and God both comprises the whole of Nature, and, as its laws, is active in all of its phenomena. In personalistic pantheism, represented by various recent thinkers, among them Royce, God is conceived as an inclusive person, of whom human persons and all other things are parts, aspects, or modes.

If polytheism is an ingenuous and relatively definite form of theism, pantheism is on the contrary an ingenious, highly sophisticated, but in the end rather nebulous one. It is a conception of the divine which has proved congenial to persons of mystical temperament, who feel that in the mystical ecstasy they experience both the all-embracing oneness of the divine and their own union with it. But the existence of evil is no less an insoluble difficulty when God is conceived both as good and as being all there is, than when—as in orthodox monotheism—he is conceived both as good and as being the omnipotent and omniscient creator of all there is. Nor is this difficulty escaped by deism, which conceives God monotheistically as creator and final judge of the world, but as wholly separate from it and never intervening in its processes or in the doings of men.

Monotheism, which writers on the philosophy of religion commonly assert to be an inherently "higher" form of theism than any polytheism—although, as if this were self-evident, without bothering to substantiate the assertion—has itself taken a variety of forms, most of them little if any less vague than those of pantheism. As Ferm advises, "if the reader has some doubt as to the vagueness of the god concept, let him read such a book as *My Idea of God* (1927), edited by Joseph Fort Newton.[9] He will there find Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, Modernist and Fundamentalist, Christian Scientist, Quaker, Ethical Culturist, Humanist, Empiricist, and Mystic—leaders in contemporary religious thought—speaking of God as if in a confusion of tongues."[10]

One of them thinks of God as "the spirit whose energy produced the world . . . and by whose will is directed the eternal procession of life." Another quotes the Vatican Council's declaration that "the Catholic Church believes that there is one true and living God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, Almighty, Eternal, Immense, Incomprehensible, Infinite in intellect and will and in all perfection; Who, being One, Individual, altogether simple and unchangeable Substance, must be asserted to be really and essentially distinct from the world, most happy in Himself, and ineffably exalted above everything that exists or can be conceived."

Another contributor thinks of God as Spirit, meaning "as the Ground and Source of all that we can call mind or reason in the universe"; another sums up his conception by saying that "God is Jesus writ large." For another, God is "the loving Father, who loves all His children with ineffable, unchanging love," but he is not the creator of mortals nor of the material universe. Rather, he is the creator "of the true man, his spiritual and perfect offspring, and of the spiritual universe." One of the contributors thinks of "an evolving God to match the scientific picture of an evolving world," who "has wrestled with his world and is still wrestling."

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[9] Joseph Fort Newton, ed., *My Idea of God* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1926).

[10] Vergilius Ferm, *First Chapters in Religious Philosophy* (New York: Round Table Press, 1937), p. 53 n.

Another of the authors expressing their views in the book declares that he is not a pantheist, that it is misleading to speak of God as personal, that he hesitates to say that God is one, or three, or a unified multiplicity. " 'God'," he states, "is a term of poetry, thrown out . . . at a reality too vast to grasp," and he declares: "of the utter reality of God I am thus convinced." Another conceives God as "the real but invisible influence of good men and women;" and yet another thinks God "both finite and infinite." Another declares that "the word 'God' differs from all others in that it stands for an idea that is essentially incommunicable," for "an indestructible belief that there is something that cannot be defined." And one of the contributors states his idea of God to be "the idea of the personified, idealised whole of reality," and thinks it "analogous to my idea of my Alma Mater," adding: "My idea of Uncle Sam is of the same character."

In these and innumerable other statements to be met with as to the nature of God, it should be noticed that the word is always spelled with a capital initial, thus making it a proper name and not only begging thereby the question of monotheism vs. polytheism, but also tacitly postulating that "God" denotes a being that really exists, not, like "Hamlet," one merely imagined to exist. It may be pointed out also that, in most cases, monotheistic conceptions attempt quite unnecessarily to pack two logically independent roles into the God-concept they construct. One is the role of loving father, comforter, protector, helper, and wise counselor, which, for the great majority of believers in a God, is what gives him day-by-day working importance in their lives; i.e., it is the role in which, as Leuba would say, they *use* their God. To play this role adequately, however, a god need not at all be unique, nor omnipotent, nor infinite in other respects, but only powerful and loving and wise enough to give the always merely finite and local help which the devotee seeks in prayer. On this point, a correspondent of the author's writes that there is much to be said in practice for the worship of saints or of the Virgin Mary or of Jesus as concrete persons; for they represent something that can be grasped and more or less understood, and, if they have power to relieve human anguish to some extent, that is a good deal for the worshiper. In connection with them, he does not need to worry about the whys and wherefores of the universe; a reasonably good and powerful saint or minor deity close at hand works better psychologically than does an incomprehensible infinite.

The other role, which monotheism generally assigns to its God, is an explanatory one, namely, to furnish an answer to the cosmological question as to how the world originated and what is its ultimate destiny. But to satisfy, or at least to silence, curiosity as to this is not for the majority of persons a function that begins to compare in importance with that of satisfying the need first described. Unless a person is a philosopher or a natural scientist, he is not likely to stay awake nights trying to answer that cosmological question; rather all he needs is a ready-made, *prima facie* plausible answer, which he can trot out when his child asks the question, or when it happens to come to his own mind in a speculative moment.

Evidently, to be capable of performing the first and important role mentioned above, a god need not in the least have created the universe whether out of nothing or out of some antecedent chaos; and, conversely, a being that had done so might well lack in greater or less degree the characteristics requisite for that first role. Indeed, since, as Hume and others have pointed out, the world we observe contains a vast amount of wickedness, of maladjustment, of frustration, and of other evils, its creator—if, which is questionable, it was ever created—must have lacked the power, or the knowledge, or the will to make it any better. Yet the world, whether it ever had a beginning or not, might well contain one or many spiritual beings with enough power, knowledge and good will to be of considerable aid to persons in trouble who seek aid. For that matter, even some men are, on occasion and within limits, capable of giving such aid to other men.

## The Cosmological Argument for Existence of the God of Monotheism

From time to time, articles or books are written concerning the question whether sea serpents really exist, or whether on the contrary the serious reports of a specimen's having been sighted are explicable as due to malobservation. If, when this question arises, one were to reply that of course sea serpents exist, namely the well-known *Hydrophidae*, which live in the warmer parts of the Indian and Pacific oceans, are viviparous, feed on fishes, have a flattened tail, and so on, one would immediately be told that although these reptiles are serpents and live in the sea, they are not what one means when one asks whether sea serpents exist.

This example brings out the basic fact that no question as to the existence or nonexistence of something is even theoretically capable of answer unless one understands to begin with *what kind of thing* it is, about which that question is being asked. If one were to accost a person and simply ask him: "Are there any?" he would naturally ask us at once: "Any what?" Lacking specification of this, one's question is completely insoluble because completely ambiguous.

The bearing of these considerations on the question as to whether a God exists is evident. It is capable of an answer—in principle at least, even if perhaps not at a given time—only if one understands what sort of a being is meant by the word God, which is used in the question. In the classical arguments for the existence of a God, the god meant has been that of monotheism, and conceived mainly in the cosmological role commented upon above. It has been a God conceived as a person, in the sense of possessed of will, feelings, knowledge, and power; but as superperson in the sense of being infinite instead of, like human persons, finite; and "perfect," i.e., omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good. The characteristic of infinity is made a part of the definition not here simply, as Leuba suggests in a different connection, out of man's insatiable megalomania, but in order to entail uniqueness of the God defined, i.e., to entail monotheism; the reasoning being that if one God's power is unlimited, then there can be no other god since the power of another would automatically limit that of the former.

The first of the three classical arguments for the existence of a God as so conceived is called the Cosmological Argument and takes as its major premise that nothing can exist or occur without a sufficient cause. It is then pointed out that no man or other thing in the world caused itself, but that each was caused by something antecedent. The same thing is true, however, of that antecedent itself, and of the antecedent of it, and so on; so that, it is argued, one must come at last to a first cause, which is God, and without which nothing at all would have come to be. This argument has been put in a variety of forms, and is the most popular. It is implicit in the common reference to God as "the Creator."

Considered by daylight, however, this "proof" is at once seen to be a logical monstrosity, since it attempts to prove its conclusion, viz., that something (to wit, God) exists without a cause, by taking as premise the very contradictory of this, viz., that nothing exists without a cause. This is exactly like arguing that, since all crows are black, therefore one crow is not black. As Schopenhauer puts the point, the law of universal causation "is not so accommodating as to let itself be used like a hired cab, which we dismiss when we have reached our destination"; [11] rather, if we start riding it, we have to keep on riding, without end.

But, it is sometimes objected, the universe *must* have had a beginning. The alleged necessity of this, however, is not evident. Many of the persons who assert it seem to have no difficulty in believing that the universe, in one form or another, or at the very least, human souls, will continue existing through infinite time. And, if infinitely prolonged existence in the forward direction is conceivable without contradiction, it is equally conceivable in the backward direction. That there must have been a beginning is no more self-evident than that there will have to be an end.

As an example of the kind of logic sometimes used in attempts to save the Cosmological Argument, may be mentioned the following purported demonstration that an infinite regress of causes is impossible. It is based on the assertion that nowhere in the backward series of causes can there be found an "adequately sufficient reason" for the existence of any one member, say *A*, of the series. This is supposedly proved by observing that "if the *adequately sufficient reason* for *A*'s existence could be found in any one such cause or group of causes, then all causes in the series prior to this group could be considered as nonexisting as far as their requirement for *A*'s existence is concerned. But if any cause in the series is considered as nonexisting, then all subsequent causes in the series must be considered as nonexisting and hence *A* as nonexisting. Hence the hypothesis, that any cause in the series can give an adequately sufficient reason for A's existence, results in the absurd conclusion that A cannot be existing." [12]

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[11] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, trans. Mme Karl Hillebrand (London: Bell and Sons, 1891), pp. 42–43.

Obviously, however, if this proves anything at all, it is only that any *one* cause, or *finite number* of causes, cannot be an "adequately sufficient reason" for the existence of A; whereas what needed to be proved was that *the whole* of an *infinite* series of prior causes is not an "adequately sufficient reason" for the existence of A. But nothing in the article cited contributes in the least to show this.

A few words may be added concerning the contradiction alleged by the French philosopher Renouvier to be involved in the supposition that an infinite series of events have already taken place. As summarized by Ferm,[13] it is that if the sum total of past events "is already infinite, nothing more can be added since the infinite cannot be made greater than itself. Thus no further events would be possible since the infinite is already reached and cannot be added to or increased—a *reductio ad absurdum.*"

The reply, of course, is that infinite series, of which there are several kinds, have peculiar properties. For instance, in an infinite series, certain parts of it have as many items as the whole of it; for example, there are just as many even numbers—namely, an infinity—as there are numbers altogether; for the number series, and the even-number series which is only a part of it, can be put in one-to-one correspondence, as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 1, & 2, & 3, & 4, & 5, & 6, & 7, \ldots \\ 2, & 4, & 6, & 8, & 10, & 12, & 14, \ldots \end{array}$$

In doing this, one would *never* run out of even numbers in the lower line, with which to match the numbers in the upper.

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[12] "Science and True Religion," by the Rev. John S. O'Conor, *The Scientific Monthly* (February, 1941), 177.

[13] Ferm, *op. cit.*, p. 124 n.

Again, it can be shown that an infinite series, each member of which consists of an infinite series of whole numbers, contains no more numbers altogether than does the series of the whole numbers. But it can also be shown that there are more numerous ways of ordering the items of the series of the whole numbers than there are whole numbers altogether, so that certain infinite collections have more items than certain other infinite collections! Also, and more directly relevant to Renouvier's contention, some infinite series do—paradoxical as it sounds—have both a first and last term; for example, the series of fractions between and including ¼ and ½. To this infinite series, it is perfectly possible to add any finite number of other fractions we please, for instance, 11/16, ⅝, and ¾; or an infinite number of other fractions, for instance, all those between ½ and ¾. But although such addition is possible, the numerousness of the sum is exactly the same as that of the fractions between and including ¼ and ½.[14] Infinite series are queer things indeed, but if one is going to bring them into an argument for the existence of a God, one has to take them with the properties they do have, queer as these may be.

An attempt is sometimes made to evade the contradiction in terms, which as Schopenhauer points out is contained in the expression "the first cause," by introducing the notion of immanent cause, or *causa sui*, and applying it to the postulated first cause, saying that it too is indeed caused, but is *self*-caused.

Causes and effects, however, are essentially events and essentially successive, so that—unless "cause" in *causa sui* is used in some sense radically other than its common one—the expression *causa sui* too is a contradiction in terms, implying as it does that the cause concerned exists before it yet exists. The right emblem for *causa sui*, Schopenhauer pointedly remarks, "is Baron Münchhausen, sinking on horseback into the water, clinging by the legs to his horse and pulling both himself and the animal out by his own pigtail." [15]

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[14] An illuminating discussion of the concept of infinity, readable without special mathematical training, is E. V. Huntington, *The Continuum as a Type of Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

The relation, however, which the expressions *causa sui* and "immanent cause" are intended to refer to, is not causality at all in its ordinary sense, but is the kind of relation which would obtain in the case of something whose *existence* would follow with *logical* necessity from its *essence*, i.e., from its nature or description. But this kind of relation, which as we shall see is the one invoked in the famous but fallacious "Ontological Proof" of the existence of God, is another monstrosity, born of confusion between, or of the dire need for one's purposes to confuse, the two distinct notions of *cause* (of the existence of something) and of *evidence* (of the truth of a proposition.) [16]

In the attempt to save the Cosmological Argument's validity, it is sometimes urged that the law of universal causality applies only to things or events whose existence is "contingent," i.e., dependent on something external to themselves, and not to something, namely, God, which being *causa sui*, is "absolutely necessary." But if it were possible at all for anything to be "self-caused," then no reason appears why the world as a whole, i.e., the *entire* series of contingent things and events, might not itself be so. The expression "absolute necessity," however, is itself internally contradictory no less than is *causa sui*, for necessity is the *relation* between something necessitated and something necessitating it, and yet "absolute necessity" would mean necessity that is *not relational*.

On the other hand; if, in the expression "absolute necessity," the qualification "absolute" is not intended to negate the relational nature of necessity, then the only meaning left for "absolute" is "categorical" (as opposed to "hypothetical"). But, that existence of something B is categorically necessary means (1) that B is so related to something else A that *if* A exists, *then* necessarily B exists; *and* (2) that A *does* exist. Hence, to prove that existence of B is necessary "absolutely," i.e., categorically, one must first have proved not only that if A exists then B necessarily exists, but also have somehow proved *that A does exist*. And, of course, the Cosmological Argument does not do this at all.

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[15] Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[16] That this confusion pervades Spinoza's *Ethics* is clearly shown by Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–20, who calls attention to the fact that Spinoza finds himself forced to write again and again, "*ratio seu causa.*"

Again, it is sometimes contended that although the existence of any particular thing or event in the causal series is accounted for by reference to its immediate cause in the series, and so on backwards *ad infinitum*, nevertheless the series as a whole, i.e., the world, could conceivably have been more or less different from what it actually has been, and therefore that a cause external to the whole series (namely, God) is required to account for its being what it actually has been, rather than different. But if this argument has any force at all, it requires us then to ask in turn for the cause of that external cause, and for the cause of its cause, etc., thus leading us only to another causal series, at right angles as it were to the series constituting the universe, but like it infinitely regressive, i.e., without a first term.

Finally, if instead of taking as major premise that nothing can exist without a cause, one were to take instead that nothing except God can exist without a cause, then no use could be made of *this* premise to show that a God exists; for it would constitute only a covert declaration that, by the word "God," one *means* a being who can exist without a cause; and the question would then remain whether any such being does or does not exist.

## The Ontological Argument

This argument was invented by St. Anselm in the eleventh century, and, having a peculiar fascination for clever minds, it has reappeared a number of times in the history of thought; but even so devout a monotheist as St. Thomas repudiates it. The argument is in substance as follows: God is "good, than which nothing greater can be thought" (*bonum, quo majus nihil cogitari potest*); hence he necessarily exists not only in thought (*in intellectu*), but also in fact (*in re*), since otherwise a greater could be thought, namely, one existing not only in thought but also in fact. More briefly still: God is perfect, perfection implies existence, therefore God exists.

A contemporary of Anselm, the monk Gaunilo, pointed out that if this argument proved anything, it would prove too much, since by it one could equally prove the existence of a perfect island: if it did not exist, it would lack one of the elements of perfection, namely, existence in fact, and would therefore not be the island of which one is thinking, which is a perfect one!

That the Ontological Argument is fallacious is evident enough to common sense, but the precise nature of the fallacy turned out to be rather elusive. It has been exposed by many writers, but by none more clearly than by Schopenhauer, who analyzed it with his usual clarity in the following words:

> Considered by daylight . . . this famous Ontological Proof is really a charming joke. On some occasion or other, some one excogitates a conception, composed of all sorts of predicates, among which however he takes care to include the predicate Actuality or Existence, either openly stated or wrapped up for decency's sake in some other predicate, such as *perfectio*, *immensitas*, or something of the kind. Now, it is well known that, from a given conception, those predicates which are essential to it—i.e., without which it cannot be thought—and likewise the predicates which are essential to those predicates themselves, may be extracted by means of purely logical analyses . . . Ac-

> cordingly the predicate Reality or Existence is now extracted from this arbitrarily thought conception, and an object corresponding to it is forthwith presumed to have real existence independently of the conception." [17]

This trick, of packing into the conception of God the *conception* of existence in order to have eventually the pleasure of finding it there—but, alas, not existence itself only the *conception* of it—moves Schopenhauer to quote from Schiller's *Piccolomini* the lines:

"Were not the thought so cursedly acute,
One might be tempted to declare it silly."

He refers to the chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* (chap. 7, Bk. II), where Aristotle "shows that defining a thing and proving its existence are two different matters, separate to all eternity; since by the one we learn *what* it is that is meant, and by the other *that* such a thing exists"—Aristotle declaring that "existence never can belong to the essence of a thing." As Kant pointed out, even the most exhaustive description of what would constitute a hundred dollar bill does not tell us whether such a bill exists.

To these criticisms of the Ontological Argument, it may be added that, to speak of God as the "perfect" being is not to assign to him any particular nature, since one can speak of perfect devils as well as of perfect saints, and of perfect circles, of perfect duplicates, etc. To say of anything that it is perfect is only to say that it is complete, i.e., possesses fully such characteristics as define its kind. Hence what is true is not that perfection implies existence, but only and innocuously, that perfection *of existence* would imply—indeed, would *mean*—fullness of existence. But this tells us nothing as to whether a God, or anything else in particular, actually exists, whether fully or not.

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[17] Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12.

## The Argument from Design

Kant, Schopenhauer, and some other critics of the classical arguments for the existence of the monotheistic God have regarded the logic of the Argument from Design as somewhat more respectable than that of the other two. It has, however, been severely criticized by Hume and, as we shall see, has ultimately the same defects as that of the Cosmological Argument.

As impressive a way as any to state the argument from design would probably be the following. Suppose that man eventually manages to reach the moon, and that when the crew of the first rocket arrives it finds not only the uninhabited and uninhabitable lifeless body astronomers had predicted they would, but also, on some rock there, a complete camera quite similar to those manufactured on earth. How could its existence there be explained?

Someone might answer that, after all, the surface of the moon has been subjected for ages to violent bombardment by meteorites, and has probably been also churned by volcanic phenomena, so that, in the billions of years of its existence, almost any imaginable arrangement of its various materials is very likely to have occurred automatically; and that the camera happens to be merely one of these chance combinations.

This explanation would of course at once be rejected as impossible on the ground that the kinds of things which the forces invoked are known to be capable of producing are radically different from the kind of thing a camera is. For example, those forces in fact do not polish but scratch and crack such pieces of glass as they may happen to work on; nor are those forces capable of cutting fine screw threads, such as exist in the lens mounting and on the lens retainer, to say nothing of then screwing the latter into the former, with the lens between. And so on.

The supposition that the camera found on the moon came into existence in this manner would therefore rightly be judged preposterous. The camera, it would be said, is an object in which every part—lens, shutter, diaphragm, focusing mechanism, shutter speed regulator, dark chamber, light-sensitive film—and the relations in space of these parts to one another, are precisely what they would have to be if a photograph is to result when the shutter release is depressed; and the only hypothesis at all plausible, to account for the existence of such a complex and special arrangement of materials, is that some intelligent being conceived the idea of photographs, desired to be able to take them, designed an apparatus which would make this possible, and constructed it.

But now it is asked, if this is the only adequate explanation of the existence of a camera, is it not then necessarily also the only adequate explanation of the existence of man's eye, which in every essential part is itself literally a camera? Man, however, neither designs nor constructs his own eye. Therefore some other intelligently purposive being—namely, God—must have done so. Hence, the argument concludes, a God must exist. The same conclusion is drawn, of course, from the existence of the numerous other specialized organs of the bodies of men and of other living beings, and is extended to the specialized conditions of temperature, moisture, composition of the atmosphere, etc., indispensable to life.[18]

Obviously, however, if such capacities as the eye possesses are explicable only as products of the intelligent activity of a purposive being, the capacities of that being himself are quite as remarkable as those of the eye he designed, and are themselves then explicable only by postulation of a purposive designer of the designer of the eye—just as a designer of men is postulated to account for the fact that men have such capacities as that of designing and constructing cameras.

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[18] Wm. Paley, *Natural Theology* (New York: Harper's Family Library, 1840) is a classical instance of such a train of thought.

But explanation thus in terms of intelligently purposive causation, instead of in terms of blind causation, still has for its major premise that nothing exists without a sufficient cause (whether blind or purposive) for its being; and from this premise, as we have seen, what follows is not that a first cause, itself uncaused, must exist, but on the contrary that none such can exist. An infinite regress—here of intelligent designer-constructors—is what the mode of explanation postulated by the Design Argument logically entails; and, as we have also seen, no logical contradiction is contained in this entailed consequence, whatever may be its merits in other respects.

A second point is that, if indeed a designer or a series of designers needs to be postulated to account for the facts in view, then such a designer need not be an omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good being, but one only potent, intelligent, and good enough to design and create the kind of world which actually exists—a world which indeed contains many clever adjustments and felicitous adaptations, but which also contains a vast amount of evil, waste, disease, maladjustment and frustration. For if man is assumed competent to perceive correctly that the universe contains many good things and exhibits much teleology, there is then no ground to deny him equal competence to perceive also correctly that the universe contains numerous evils and much dysteleology. The pious admonitions to distrust his competence to judge that one thing or another is really an evil, which are addressed to him by writers of theodicies, are called for equally with regard to man's judgment that this or that thing is really good, if they are called for at all.

It is well to bear in mind further that a designer is not necessarily superior in every respect to what he designs and constructs: man, for instance, designs and constructs many instruments—microscopes, electronic computers, steam shovels, etc.—whose capacities to do certain things vastly exceed his own. Indeed, even the simplest of the innumerable tools man makes is constructed by him because he himself lacks capacities the tool possesses: even a crude knife or axe has a better cutting edge than have man's teeth or nails.

At this point, however, we may return to the comparison of the eye to the camera, and ask whether it is indeed true, as the Argument from Design asserts, that only intelligent plan and construction can account for the existence of such highly adapted structures. The answer, as Hume points out, is that this is only one of the ways in which, according to experience, such structures actually come into being. Natural growth, vegetable and animal, is another actual way; and if, instead of starting with the camera, we should elect to start with the eye, then, if we had not observed how cameras are constructed, what the similarity of the camera to the eye would suggest to us would be that the camera too must be somehow a product of *natural growth*. To suppose it, of course, would be to speculate—to postulate that the process of coming to be, in a case, viz., the camera's, where we did not observe it, is of the same kind, viz., growth, as in the case of the eye, where we do observe it taking place—ontogenetically through cell division, and phylogenetically through mutation and automatic elimination of mutations disadvantageous to preservation of life. But the converse supposition, viz., that the eye comes into existence as does the camera, is speculation too and speculation quite as wild; for in the production of the eye we do not observe any hands, lens-polishing instruments, or other tools such as produce a camera. Nor do we observe any designer at work. Moreover, if we speculatively postulate one, we have to postulate in addition that he is capable of doing in some wholly mysterious manner without hands or tools what camera makers can do only by means of these. And further, if we proceed on the supposition that the eye comes into existence, like the camera, by design and intelligent construction, then what the supposition suggests is not one infinitely wise and potent designer-constructor, but much rather a plurality of finite designers and artisans, collaborating to turn out a generally neat but by no means perfect piece of work—indeed, sometimes one so defective that a camera maker that did no better would soon go bankrupt.

Rather than all this, however, we can suppose more economically but quite as explanatorily that the eye is, as Schopenhauer would have said, an automatic objectification of an obscure craving or felt need to see; the hand, of a craving to grasp, etc. Such craving, however, not being *purpose* since purpose implies not only a craving but in addition an idea of what would satisfy the craving; and still less being *intelligent* purpose since this implies not only a craving and an idea of what would satisfy it, but in addition knowledge, or at least beliefs, as to what actions would or might bring into existence that which would satisfy the craving. It may be objected that we do not understand *how* an obscure craving to see can generate an eye or at least the bodily variations which gradually culminate in an eye. But we do not understand in the least better *how* the craving of a designer external to man, that man shall have an eye, can generate without hands or tools that eye in man. Hence, if we suppose a craving to be somehow capable of doing the trick, it is more economical to locate it in the animal himself, who at least is known to exist, than in an external designer, whose existence is purely supposititious and not in the least more explanatory.

The considerations appealed to by the Argument from Design thus do not, when their implications are developed logically, contribute anything that would support the hypothesis of an omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good designer. Rather, they militate against it. The only sort of God compatible with, though not evidenced by, the observable facts would be, as John Stuart Mill perceived, a God possibly great but nevertheless limited in power, or knowledge, or goodness, or in any two or all three of these respects.

## Other Common Arguments

We may now consider briefly certain other arguments for the existence of the god of monotheism—some of which are variants of those already discussed—that are sometimes advanced.

One of them dates from Aristotle and is identical in essence with the Cosmological Argument, but is worded in terms of changes or motions (ϰίνησις) instead of in terms of causes and effects. The argument is that the changes we observe require explanation; that to explain a given one by reference to some other change involves one in an infinite regress; that this is unacceptable either because an infinite regress is impossible, or because, even if possible, it would explain only particular changes but not change itself; and therefore that there must be an Unmoved Prime Mover (πρωτον ϰινουν), which is God.

One comment on this would be that motionlessness, changelessness, i.e., rest, is just as much in need of explanation as is change. If, when we observe change, it is legitimate to ask, "What started it?" it is equally legitimate, when we observe something at rest, to ask, "What stopped it?" It is equally possible to postulate motion as the "natural" state of things—so that rest is then what needs accounting for—or to postulate that rest is their "natural" state, and motion then what requires explanation. Heracleitus and Parmenides come to mind in this connection. The unwarrantedly assumed impossibility of an infinite regress, on the other hand, has already been commented upon.

Another type of argument sometimes used takes a variety of forms; for instance, that perception by man of finiteness in things presupposes in him the idea of infinity, as standard by comparison with which alone finiteness is detectable; that, since neither man nor the things he perceives are infinite, he cannot have obtained from them his idea of infinity; hence that it must have been implanted in his mind by a being himself infinite, to wit, God. Sometimes what is essentially the same argument is stated in terms of degrees of excellence, short of perfection, in all that man observes—this allegedly implying in the same way the existence of a perfect being.

The obvious reply is that, to perceive that a given man's height is finite, I need compare him only with a somewhat taller man, not with an infinitely tall man or an infinitely long measuring stick. Similarly, I can tell that a given apple tastes less good—has a lesser degree of excellence—than another, without need for this that that other shall be perfect. Nor is there the least mystery in the manner in which man, having thus obtained from experience the notion of finiteness of size or excellence, makes for himself, by simply coupling the negative "not" with it, the notions of infinity and of perfection.

To the contention that, in the mystic ecstasy, God is actually experienced, and therefore exists, what has been said in the preceding chapter is a sufficient reply. The immense value to the mystic of the state of consciousness constituting the ecstasy is fully granted; but that an omnipotent, omniscient and completely good being that created the world in seven days, etc., had anything to do with that ineffably blissful state of consciousness is not ecstasy but theology—not mystical experience but speculation as to what mystical experience perhaps signifies.

The so-called moral arguments for the existence of a God stem more or less directly from Kant's contention that moral imperatives, i.e., "oughts," are categorical not conditional, absolute not relative, and thus may demand of the individual that he sacrifice his interests and himself; and that the categorical imperative of our moral consciousness would be an essentially immoral fact if the virtuous man should not ultimately—in a future life if not on earth—be happy in addition to virtuous. The conclusion is then offered that a guarantor of this—namely, God—must exist.

This train of argument, in no matter which of its later ingenious elaborations it is considered, is patently nothing but a piece of wishful thinking. Further, the guarantor the argument postulates would not in the least need to be the god of monotheism. The impersonal law of Karma of Buddhism would function equally well for the purpose; or a polytheistic Board of Ultimate Rewards and Punishments; or a single but finite God such as J. S. Mill postulated, if merely potent and just enough for the purpose in view. And of course Kant's notion of a categorical imperative is itself questionable on various grounds, for instance, that its voice is the result of a "conditioning" process forgotten by us; or that, as Morris conceives it, "ought" is a word signifying simply that the user of it *appraises* a certain sort of action as having positive or negative value, and utters the word for the purpose of *inciting* the hearer (who may be himself or another person) to act, or as the case may be to refrain from acting, in that particular manner.[19]

Even the foregoing brief examination of the principal arguments that have been offered to prove the existence of the God of orthodox monotheism makes evident that they are all only attorney's arguments—arguments of men convinced *ab initio* that their client's case is just, bent on making him win, carefully selecting evidential items *prima facie* favorable to his case, and ingeniously weaving them into arguments adapted to convince an emotional, favorably prejudiced, and therefore none too critical jury, even if these arguments neither really prove what they contend nor make it more probable than not. How purely rhetorical and merely make-believe really are all the common arguments offered for the existence of the monotheistic God is made plain by the fact that their proponents, as soon as they have pointed at some fact that needs to be explained, at once then offer as explanation of it the particular kind of God they had up their sleeve from the start, instead of, as logical scrupulousness would demand, only the kind of God, or of other supposition, that would suffice to explain the fact they pointed at.

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[19] C. W. Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1946), pp. 138 ff.

## Atheism, Agnosticism, and Faith

That the arguments for the existence of the God of orthodox monotheism furnish neither proof nor positive probability of it does not mean, of course, that existence of that God is automatically disproved or shown to be improbable. Such improbability or impossibility as may attach to the supposition that he exists has to derive from the particular nature he is postulated to have and from incompatibility of that nature with known facts, for instance, with the fact that evil exists.

On the other hand, the arguments militant atheists advance to show that there is no God, or that it is improbable that any God or gods exist, are equally defective except when they rig up some god-of-straw especially for the purpose of knocking it down, or select invidiously as target some particularly preposterous kind of God out of the abundant material suitable for this which is admittedly to be found in the history of the religions of mankind. This means that earnest atheism at least, no less than theism, is a species of faith not of knowledge—a negative instead of an affirmative faith.

The agnostic, on the other hand, is a man who perceives this and in addition finds himself willing and able to suspend judgment.

As we have emphasized earlier, however, a belief, in order to motivate action and to generate feelings and attitudes, need be neither clear, nor known to be true, nor actually true. Nor, as we contended in agreement with William James, is there any valid reason why a person should not, if he finds it psychologically possible to do so, adhere to a belief that is of much value to him personally and that makes him a more valuable member of society, if that belief is one for whose truth or falsity he has no evidence or one where the evidence he has *pro* and *contra* is equally balanced, and if the belief is in addition such that an agnostic attitude toward it would deprive him of the same values as would definite rejection of it. But, for many persons, theistic belief—whether of the mono-, pan-, or polytheistic variety, and whether clear or as very generally, vague—certainly has a high degree of positive value, of which atheistic belief, or even only agnosticism, would deprive those persons. Moreover, because theistic belief was planted in them in childhood, and because its very vagueness usually insures it against the risks to which critical examination would expose it if it were clear, they find themselves psychologically able to hold on to it notwithstanding that, as the preceding discussion has attempted to show, there is really no evidence that the belief is true—nor of course, at least in some of its forms, that it is false.

Such persons are psychologically fortunate.

## Chapter 16

# THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

In the preceding chapter, repeated reference was made to the problem with which the existence of evil confronts believers in a God of the type conceived by the variety of monotheism which I have called "orthodox"—that is, the variety which conceives its God as having created the world out of nothing, and as having among his attributes at least perfect goodness, omnipotence, and omniscience.

Now that we are addressing ourselves directly to that problem, let us formulate it with full explicitness. It is this: If men and all other things in the world were created by an omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely good God, then, because omniscient, he knew *ab initio* that there would be evil in the kind of world he was creating; because omnipotent, he could have prevented this evil and indeed could eliminate it even now; and, because perfectly good, he would not have willed to create the kind of world in which evil would exist, and he would not now allow it to persist. Yet evil is rampant on earth.

As so stated, the problem is evidently an intellectual, and more specifically a theoretical, problem, which arises at all only if one assumes *ab initio* that a God of the kind described exists and created the world. Without such an initial assumption, the existence of evil would no more give rise to a contradiction than would the existence of good or of anything else in particular. What would remain would be only the *practical* problem of evil, namely, what to do about the evil that exists —how to eliminate it or at least minimize it. *This* is the "problem of evil" in, for instance, Buddhism; or in Zoroastrianism, which conceives its god, Ahura Mazda, as limited in power and as engaged in struggle with its devil, Angra Mainyu —a struggle in which man can participate by aligning himself, as he chooses, with one side or the other. For contemporary Humanism too, which, being naturalistic, rejects orthodox monotheism, the only "problem of evil" is the purely practical one of doing whatever may be possible to remedy particular evils.

The theologians of orthodox monotheism have expended vast ingenuity on the attempt to dispose of the *prima facie* contradiction which constitutes their problem of evil. We shall consider some of the chief solutions of it which have been proposed. But we cannot judge of their merits with confidence unless we are first thoroughly clear as to what the words "evil" and "evils" denote.

## What Evil Is

When we say of a medicine that it has an *evil* taste, what we mean is plainly that its taste is *unpleasant*. That the taste is evil in this sense to the person who is experiencing it is an absolute fact; that is, it is a fact no matter what the medicine may happen to consist of; no matter whether the unpleasantness of the taste to him is native or acquired; no matter whether the unpleasantness is permanent or disappears after habituation; no matter whether the medicine which has the evil taste is or is not a good remedy for whatever may be ailing him; and no matter also whether or not the memory of the unpleasantness of the taste of the cure, added to the unpleasantness of the ailment itself, eventually leads him to avoid the kind of occasion which caused the ailment and thus makes him a wiser man.

In the light of this example, we may introduce certain terms, the use of which is indispensable for clarity in any discussion of evil and of its opposite, good. The first of those terms is "intrinsically evil" or "an intrinsic evil." By speaking of a taste itself, for instance, or of any other immediate experience itself, as *intrinsically evil,* we shall mean simply that *it is found unpleasant in greater or lesser degree by the experiencing person.* If on the contrary he finds it pleasant, then we shall speak of it as intrinsically good or as an intrinsic good.

Further, wherever in the sequel we use the word "pain," we shall not mean by it, as do psychologists, a particular *sensory quality,* which, although generally unpleasant, may when of low intensity be mildly pleasant.[1] We shall instead take the word "pain" in its ordinary, nontechnical sense of *strong unpleasantness.* That is, by a "painful" experience, we shall mean one that is strongly unpleasant, whether perhaps not more so than a scratch or pin prick, or perhaps as much so as what would be called torture, bodily or mental.

Keeping in mind that to speak of an experience as intrinsically evil is to say that it is unpleasant or painful to the person having it, we then see that no contradiction is involved in supposing that, for a given person or perhaps for others, it is sometimes a *good* thing that he should have a particular *intrinsically evil* experience; for it means only that the fact of his having it, will, for himself or others, have or contribute to *consequences* which ultimately are intrinsically good. In such a case we shall say that the experience, although intrinsically evil (or perhaps even because intrinsically evil) is nonetheless *instrumentally* good.

This, of course, leaves wholly open the question whether the instrumental goodness of it is great enough, or on the contrary too small, to outweigh its intrinsic evilness; or, if on the contrary the experience is intrinsically good, whether its intrinsic goodness is great enough, or too small, to outweigh such instrumental evilness as it may have.

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[1] See E. B. Titchener, A *Textbook of Psychology* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1909), Part I, p. 115; or H. C. Warren and L. Carmichael, *Elements of Human Psychology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), p. 134.

It goes without saying that a given experience may well be *both* intrinsically and instrumentally evil; or *both* intrinsically and instrumentally good. In the majority of cases, however, an experience, or the situation which causes it, has a variety of consequences, some of them evil and some of them good. And the experience itself, if it is complex, may have both pleasant and unpleasant characters; for example, in the immediate experience generated by tasting a certain substance, the gustatory component of the experience might be pleasant but the olfactory component unpleasant.

These remarks make evident that the immediate experiences we call suffering, discomfort, pain, aches, anguish, misery, distress, unhappiness, pangs, uneasiness, etc., all of which are unpleasant whether intensely or mildly, are in so far evils—*intrinsic evils*; that whatever states of affairs cause or contribute to cause them are in so far evils—*instrumental evils*, i.e., sources of evil; and that those immediate experiences themselves, in so far as their consequences happen to be evil, are *instrumental evils* too, in addition to being intrinsic evils. The qualification, "in so far," is called for by the fact pointed out above that experiences, their causes, and their effects, have in most cases both some good and some evil features.

Of course, persons too—their dispositions, their thoughts, their feelings, their habits, their acts—are capable of being evil; but their evilness is analyzable in the terms already defined. The act of punishing a much loved child is painful—is an intrinsic evil—to the parent doing it; and experiencing the punishment is, for the child, also an intrinsic evil. Yet the act, performed as it is for the sake of its contributing to mold the child's moral character, can, if done intelligently, be instrumentally good. The forms of action called evil—lying, stealing, cheating, getting drunk, killing, and so on—are so because, under normal circumstances, they tend directly or indirectly to cause far more suffering than happiness. If drunkenness, for instance, in addition to such intrinsic pleasantness as it has, had regularly the effect of making the drunkard healthy instead of sick, and caused him to act intelligently and wisely instead of stupidly and disastrously, then drunkenness would be not a vice but a virtue. The kinds of thoughts or feelings commonly ranked as evil are those which, whether in themselves pleasant or unpleasant, tend to express themselves in courses of action generally productive of evil, that is, of gratuitous suffering. Evil dispositions or habits are those which predispose one to react in evil ways to given kinds of situations. And a person is evil in so far as his dispositions, habits, attitudes, moods, feelings, thoughts, or impulses are evil in the senses stated.

## Four Classes of Evils

When one attempts to classify the evils to which sentient beings are subject, what are called *physical evils* are probably the first to suggest themselves. They comprise all the pains and discomforts which arise from disease, from accidents, or from duress upon the body—headaches, toothaches, neuralgias; the pains of cancer, of arthritis, of wounds, of bruises, broken bones, burns; of heat, cold, thirst, hunger; of exhausting labor; and so on. Some persons whether by virtue of an exceptionally healthy constitution, or by the exercise of intelligence, or by good fortune, live from birth to death with but little of any of those pains; whereas others are plagued with a long succession of them.

A second group of evils are those we may call *psychological evils*. They include the sufferings due to unrequited love; to separation from, or death of, the beloved; to anxiety, fear, frustration, loneliness; and to other unhappy psychological states not traceable to causes in or accidents to the body of the suffering person, nor to vices in him or wickedness in others.

Mention of vice and wickedness brings us to a third group —that of *moral evils.* They comprise all defects of moral character—traits such as malice, hatred, greed, jealousy, selfishness, cruelty, intemperance, and so on, which automatically tend to cause suffering to the persons who have them or to others.

Lastly, there are *intellectual evils*—stupidity, irrationality, insanity, poor judgment, defective perception, and the errors or ignorance these breed, which prevent a person from dealing effectively with many of the situations he faces.

## Metaphysical Evil

The philosopher Leibniz, whose *Theodicy* gave currency to this name for treatises attempting to reconcile the existence of evil with the justice of God (θεός, God, + δίκη, justice), distinguishes three kinds of evil—metaphysical, physical, and moral. Physical evil, he says, consists in suffering. Moral evil he conceives in theological terms, as "sin," but we have seen that moral evil can be defined, less questionably, in terms purely of what observation and reason discloses; and that if this is done, the things termed sins, when they really are evil, are so simply in virtue of the suffering intrinsic to them, or of the sufferings they naturally tend to bring about, or in virtue of both of these together.

By "metaphysical" evil, Leibniz means the fact that finiteness, limitation, is an absolute condition of the existence of any world at all. Only God himself can be infinite, unlimited, perfect; hence, if anything besides God is to exist at all, it necessarily has to be limited, imperfect. It has to contain at least the minimum of evil which the inherent finiteness of created beings automatically entails. As Leibniz puts it, "there is an original imperfection in the creature before sin, because the creature is limited essentially, and hence could not know everything and may make mistakes and commit other faults . . . metaphysical evil consists simply in imperfection, physical evil in suffering, and moral evil in sin." [2]

Leibniz thus does not argue that there is really no evil, or not much evil in the world; but only that there is no more of it than follows necessarily from the finiteness of anything other than God himself. It is this which he means when he asserts that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds—an optimism which, as often has been pointed out, is quite compatible with the assertion of pessimists, or of merely realists, that the best of all possible worlds is then a pretty bad world.

Evidently, "metaphysical evil" is not really the name of another category of evil besides the four we have mentioned; it is only the name of the explanation Leibniz offers for the fact that evil, of whatever kind, exists notwithstanding the goodness of God, and notwithstanding God's power to create any possible world.

Commenting on Leibniz's assertion that the world which actually exists is the best that was possible, Schopenhauer contends that, on the contrary, "the world . . . is as bad as it possibly can be if it is to continue to be at all." He argues that if planetary disturbances, volcanic cataclysms, corruptions of the atmosphere, abnormalities of temperature, defects in the organization of living things, and so on, were even a little worse than they actually are, this earth and everything on it would perish. "Even of the human race," he says, "powerful as are the weapons it possesses in understanding and reason, nine tenths live in constant conflict with want, always balancing themselves with difficulty and effort upon the brink of destruction. Thus, throughout, as for the continuance of the whole, so also for that of each individual being, the conditions are barely and scantily given, but nothing more . . . this world is so arranged as to be able to maintain itself with great difficulty; but if it were a little worse, it could no longer maintain itself. Consequently a worse world, since it could not continue to exist, is absolutely impossible; thus this world is the worst of all possible worlds." [3]

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[2] Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, "Théodicée, Essais sur la Bonté de Dieu et la Liberté de l'Homme," *Oeuvres de Leibniz* (Paris: Charpentier, 1842), §§ 20, 21.

No doubt, it is Schopenhauer's temperament, rather than any cool survey of facts, which speaks in these words. But Leibniz's optimism is hardly more objective. That finiteness necessarily entails evil, or as much evil as actually exists, is very far from evident, especially when, as we have done, one has purged the notion of evil of the vagueness, the ambiguities, and the resultant *quid pro quo*'s, which commonly infest it. For one then sees that finiteness or limitation, such as is inherent in man's being man at all, is not automatically an evil. It is so only when it is a source of pain. But men and other sentient beings, though finite, are free from pain during the many moments, hours, or days of their lives when their bodily and other limited capacities are yet adequate to deal felicitously with the tasks or situations that happen to come their ways. And such suitability of equipment to environment, or of environment to equipment, could, by an omnipotent God, have been made universal instead of only occasional.

Additional light will be thrown on the whole subject if we now examine the notion of *possibility* and its implications as to what it would be or have been possible or impossible for an omnipotent God to create.

## Omnipotence, the Possible, and the Impossible

We need here first to distinguish between logical and natural possibility or impossibility.

That is *logically* impossible, the program of which contains a contradiction whether explicit or implicit. Any such program is automatically self-canceling; i.e., is really no program at all, since to say that it contains a contradiction means that it forbids what it prescribes and prescribes what it forbids. For example, to speak and at the same time not speak; or to be, in the very same respect and by the same standard, at once good and not good; or finite and not finite; or free and not free; or wise and not wise; etc., are programs logically impossible—self-nullifying—which, because they are thus pseudo-programs, neither man nor God can carry out or satisfy. Hence God is not omnipotent if "omnipotent" means capable of doing even the *logically* impossible.

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[3] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea,* trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, 1906), Vol. III, pp. 395–96.

On the contrary, that is *possible within Nature*, the program of which is not only free from contradictions, but also does not require that the "laws of Nature," i.e., the properties of whatever Nature comprises, be other than what they actually are.

Since the question now in view concerns what is or is not naturally possible *to God*, or *to man*, "Nature" has to be taken, not as inclusive of *all* that exists, but as comprising *whatever confronts a given purposive being, human or divine.* Hence, since a given purposive being is confronted not only by the inanimate parts of Nature but also by the other purposive beings that exist, Nature will have a slightly different content for each. This means that the question as to what is and is not possible within Nature is a "systematically ambiguous" one. That is, the answer to it is essentially relative to specification of some particular purposive being, and of the powers he happens to possess or lack; for obviously, what would be possible for one person to do might be impossible to another whose powers were different.

Now to say that a given man has a certain power *P* means that, under circumstances and with implements of given kinds, volition by him to make some event *E* occur is immediately or mediately sufficient to cause occurrence of *E*. For example, given the properties in fact possessed by ink, by pens, and by paper; also the fact that I now have at hand pen, ink and paper; also the fact that my arm is not now paralyzed; etc., then I now have the power to write: writing is one of the things it is now *naturally possible* for me to do at will. Obviously, many other things are in the corresponding sense *naturally impossible* to me; i.e., I do not have unlimited power—omnipotence—within Nature.

The God of orthodox monotheism, on the contrary, is conceived as having omnipotence in the very sense just described, not only *within* Nature, but in addition *over* Nature, in the sense that he can at will alter, or make exceptions to, the laws of now existing Nature; whereas men cannot do this, but can accomplish their purposes *only through discovery of those laws and application of them.* Thus, what is "naturally possible" to man means what, with the powers he has, he can do *within the kind of "Nature" which actually exists.* But what is "naturally possible" to an omnipotent God includes not only what he, with his complete knowledge of the laws of this particular kind of "Nature," could do within it by applying them; but includes also creating or having created *a different kind of "Nature"*—a world whose constituent objects and beings would behave according to laws, i.e., would have properties and capacities, as *different as he pleased from those which obtain in the present kind of world;* provided only that, in the program of a different such world, no logical contradiction was contained.

Because power *over* Nature as well as *within* Nature is thus an intrinsic part of the power of an omnipotent creator, it is far from evident either that the finiteness of any possible world necessarily entails existence in it of as much evil as there is in the present world, or indeed of any evil at all.

## Some Attempted Solutions of the Problem

Let us now consider the chief forms which have been taken by attempts to dispose of the contradiction between the existence of evil and existence of a God having the attributes which orthodox monotheism postulates.

One proposed solution consists in denying that any evil at all really exists—in saying that evil only appears to exist, that in reality it is only an illusion, and that to believe it exists is an error.

This would-be solution of the problem has in our days gained a certain popularity in some of the neoreligions, but its naïveté becomes obvious as soon as one asks whether illusions and errors are themselves goods or on the contrary evils. Of course, only one answer is possible. Hence what this purported refutation of the existence of evil really does is only to mention one particular kind of evil—namely, illusion, error, delusion, false belief—and to assert that *all* evil is of that special kind. But even if it were true that all evil is of a single kind, the fact would remain that a toothache, for instance, or migraine, or neuralgia, and so on, *hurts*, is *painful*, that is, is intrinsically evil; and this no matter what particular names, such as "illusion" or "false belief" one may please to tag it with, and no matter also whether illusion or error should happen to be what generates the pain.

Conceivably, of course, migraine or any particular other pain might be exorcisable simply by calling it names—for instance by calling it "illusion"—or curable by dispelling the illusion which, supposedly, generated it. But even if this were feasible, to point it out would not be to show that there *are* no toothaches, headaches or neuralgia, but only to show that the world is less evil than it would be if these and other pains were beyond the possibility of cure.

These remarks apply equally to the variant of the purported solution just considered which, instead of saying that evil is an illusion, asserts that evil is "purely negative"—that it is nothing positive but only the absence of good; for however this may be, the fact remains that migraine and other such ailments do occur and are painful.

Another contention sometimes met with is that certain things which, if taken by themselves, would be evil, do, because they are in fact parts in an inclusive whole, actually enhance the good of the whole. The standard illustration is the fact that certain discords, skillfully woven into a musical composition, may give it greater beauty than it would have if it were free from them. Or again, a sharp condiment, such as red pepper, may enhance the taste of a dish in which it is present, although, if tasted by itself, it would be unpleasant. This, one is told, is exactly the situation as regards the evils of the world. Man, presumptuously and invalidly, views them in isolation from the whole in which they are the enhancing discords or condiments; but God, who apprehends the whole at once, perceives that they contribute to make it better than it otherwise would be. Indeed, it has even been maintained that a part of the bliss of the elect in paradise consists in the joy of beholding the damned writhing eternally in hell—a joy of which their heavenly happiness would be short if there were no wicked to be damned.

The obvious comment on this proposed solution of the problem of evil is that even if the evils in the world make it better as perceived from God's point of view, they make it worse as perceived from man's point of view. And there *is* such a point of view as man's. To call it invalid, arbitrary, presumptuous, or by other condemnatory names does not enable man to surrender it and to take up God's point of view instead. To tell someone that although *he* happens to be having a raging toothache, nevertheless somebody else, whether called God or John Doe, does not suffer from it—or even that it adds to the value of what that other person beholds—might conceivably be telling him something true. But still the man with the toothache is neither God nor John Doe but only himself; and he exists; and he is in pain.

Another consideration of which much is often made is that many evils are really blessings in disguise; that is, that although in themselves they are evils, yet in the more or less long run they work for good, and often for good far outweighing the evils which brought it about. William Blake, for instance, has among his Proverbs of Hell one to the effect that if the fool but persists in his folly, he eventually becomes wise. Again, it has been argued that private vices, or at least certain of them, redound to the public benefit. And again, although, as Franklin remarked, experience is a dear school but fools will learn in no other, yet the fact remains that they do learn in it, so that, if their run is long enough, they become wise.

On the other hand, the common saying that there is no fool like an old fool indicates that sometimes the fool's run is too short for him to harvest the golden wisdom his folly would otherwise have brought him. Thus, not all evils are blessings in disguise. Many appear to be completely unmitigated; and, that they are not really so but ultimately have redeeming good fruits is not in the least shown by pious phrases as to the mysteriousness of God's ways. Moreover, although some evils do turn out to have been blessings in disguise, so, equally, do some blessings turn out to have been evils in disguise.

But even if it should somehow be true that all evils ultimately work for good, and for good great enough to outweigh the evil that was the means to it, even then all that would be true would be that the world is less evil than it would be if evils never bred goods but only further evils.

Finally—and this is the crucial point—that wisdom is gained only by learning from mistakes; or, more sweepingly, that often the good which man does is done only at the cost of some suffering—that is, by means intrinsically evil even if instrumentally good; this state of affairs, let it be noted, is due to the fact that man has to use such means as are left at his disposal by the limitations of his intelligence, of his knowledge, and of his equipment; and by the particular positions in which he finds himself at given times. But, as already pointed out, the means open within Nature to an omnipotent and omniscient God would be free from these limitations. Nor would such a God be bound as man is to work by applying the laws of existing Nature, since he would have the power to change them or to make as many exceptions to them as he pleased. Such a God could make all men be born with the sound constitution, the resistance to disease, the intelligence, and the other precious native endowments which now only a few have. He could confer on man at the start the wisdom and the virtue which now—with luck—a man gains only in the end and only at the price of blood, sweat and tears. For it is *not* true, as some have contended that moral goodness could not be created as such or implanted by God in his creatures, but has, by its very nature, to be earned.[4] The nature of moral goodness can be defined wholly without reference to the way or ways in which it may come to be possessed; hence, that it could not possibly be bestowed but must be earned cannot be deduced from its nature, and is not true. What is true is only that no *man* can implant it ready-made into another man, so that, as the world and men are actually constituted and placed, each has to earn it for himself. An omnipotent God, however, could have conferred it on all men.

We pass now to what may be called the standard answer to the question how then evil originates, if not because God chose to make the world such that evil would occur in it.

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[4] Cf. P. Bertocci, *The Empirical Argument for God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 260.

## Descartes on Evil and Free Will

Descartes contends that moral and intellectual evil, at least, is traceable to man's misuse of the faculty of free choice with which God endowed him. He regards the essence of these forms of evil as consisting in error, and puts the matter substantially as follows.

God has given us both the power of willing and the power of understanding. The first consists in this, "that we can make a choice; we can do a given thing or not do it—that is to say, we can affirm or deny, pursue or avoid." But this power, Descartes holds, is not of itself the source of my errors, "for it is very ample and perfect in its own kind." Nor is the power of understanding of itself their source, for although it is much more limited than the faculty of choice, and the conceptions our understanding frames may therefore be false, nevertheless this alone would not make them errors; for error consists not simply in entertaining a false conception, but in believing it. Whence then, Descartes asks, spring my errors?

He answers: "Only from the fact that the will is much more ample and far-reaching than the understanding, so that I do not restrain it within the same limits but extend it even to those things which I do not understand. Being by its nature indifferent about such matters, it very easily is turned aside from the true and the good and chooses the false and the evil. And thus it happens that I make mistakes and that I sin." [5] Hence, if I use rightly the freedom of will God has given me, I can always avoid error, "for whenever I restrict my volition within the bounds of my knowledge—whenever my volition makes no judgment except upon matters clearly and distinctly reported to it by the understanding—it cannot happen that I err." [6]

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[5] René Descartes, *Meditations,* trans. L. J. Lafleur (New York: Liberal Arts Press, Inc., 1951), pp. 51–52.

[6] Descartes, *op. cit.,* pp. 53–54.

Evidently these contentions of Descartes' are open to criticism on several grounds. For one, it is questionable that not only intellectual evil, but also "sin," i.e., moral evil, can as he assumes be brought in all cases under the category of error. For error consists in believing something false and nobody does this if he *knows* it to be false, but only, sometimes, when he *does not know* it to be false; whereas "sin" does not always consist in choosing a course *not known* clearly and distinctly to be good, but sometimes in choosing a course clearly and distinctly *known* to be evil, that is, to be causative of gratuitous suffering. Indeed, precisely this is what malice consists in. The pleasure which the malicious person gets from the malicious act depends on his being aware that his act will cause suffering to another. That it will have this effect is the very thing, knowledge of which motivates him to perform the act.

But secondly, even if moral as well as intellectual evil were always an instance of error, it would even then not be true that, as Descartes asserts, error can always be avoided by suspending judgment when one does not clearly and distinctly perceive that the idea which invites one's assent is true. In so maintaining, Descartes overlooks the fact that the choices which confront us are sometimes of the kind Wm. James called *forced options*—choices, as will be recalled, in which suspense of judgment has the same consequences as would decision in favor of a certain one of the alternatives, and in which, therefore, suspending judgment amounts in fact to choosing that particular one of the alternatives.

Aside from this, however, Descartes acknowledges that it would have been easy for God, without abrogating the freedom of man's will or the finiteness of his knowledge, to insure that he should never fall into error. God might, for example, "have given my understanding a clear and distinct comprehension of all the things about which I should ever deliberate." And, to account for the fact that God nevertheless did not give him this comprehension, all Descartes finds to say is something similar in content to one of the positive contentions criticized in the preceding section, but phrased by Descartes only as a possibility which he "cannot deny," namely, "that the universe may be somehow more perfect because some of its parts are not free from defect while others are, than it would be if all its parts were alike." [7]

It will have been noticed that Descartes speaks throughout as if man's volitions were *themselves* subject to his will—for instance when he speaks of a man's restraining or failing to restrain *his volitions* to what he clearly and distinctly understands. This tacitly assumes two different levels of volitions, one comprising the volitions *to be restrained or released,* and the other comprising the volitions *that are to do the restraining or releasing* of the first.

Forms of language which would thus tacitly involve an infinite regress of levels of will indicate that, before we can see clearly whether the evil man does is traceable to the exercise he makes of his "free will," we need to inquire more carefully than does Descartes into the nature of the freedom commonly so labeled.

## In What Sense and How Far Man Is Free

Two ulterior purposes commonly rule the theological discussions of man's freedom. One is to absolve somehow from guilt for the evil in the world a God conceived as world-creator and as perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent. "Free will" seems able to do just that, by putting the guilt, as Descartes argues, on man's misuse of his free will. The other purpose is to be able to maintain that the suffering which men undergo or will undergo is a just punishment for their sins. "Free will" seems to be the means of showing this too, for, it is argued, if man sins freely and knowingly, he is then morally responsible for his sins, and punishment for them, divine or human, is then just. That the theology of orthodox monotheism has these two axes to grind is why it insists, even when its notion of the nature of "free will" is vague, that man's will is free anyway.

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Probably because thought on this topic has so often been confused by theological preoccupations, oceans of ink have been expended on it. The result in most cases has been—as with the squid's ejection of ink when in trouble—to envelop in obscurity the subject in view rather than to illuminate it. When on the contrary one approaches it empirically and rationally it turns out to present no particular difficulty. In dealing with it, however, we must not, as so commonly is done, attack directly the question whether man's will is or is not free, but must ask first what exactly it is, which, under the name of "free will," it is asserted or denied that man possesses.

The plain man is convinced that his will is free, not only because "free," as contrary of "slave," is a eulogistic term, but also and chiefly because he thinks he observes himself exercising this freedom again and again. When he is asked for examples of such exercise, he is likely to say, for instance, that at the very moment he can, as he chooses, either raise his arm or keep it down; or again, that he can if he but wills, look to the right, or the left, or up, or down. Or, in more general terms, he may say as did Descartes that he can choose to do a given thing or not do it—that he can, as he wills, affirm or deny, pursue or avoid, etc.

Taking it that these are indeed concrete examples of the exercise of what is meant by freedom of the will, it is then at once evident that "free will" is very much of a misnomer for what it is actually employed to denote; for what all the examples illustrate is not freedom of *will* but freedom of *action* —freedom to *act* as one wills. But even admitting that the name is inappropriate, there is yet no doubt that what the plain man means when he employs it is a fact: It *is* a fact that at this moment, when my arm is neither paralyzed or shackled, I *can,* i.e., I *am free to,* raise it if I will or not raise it if I do not will. For, that I can raise it if I but will means simply that, under present circumstances, *volition by me to raise it is sufficient to cause it to rise;* and, to prove that such volition *is* sufficient now to cause this, I need only make the experiment: I do so and up goes the arm. The alternative experiment, of course, is equally easy. My arm not being at this moment grasped and forcibly lifted by anybody or caused to rise automatically by some such stimulus as sight of an approaching missile, my not willing to raise it is sufficient to maintain it down.

Certainly then, man *at times* can, i.e., is free to, *do* what he wills to do and *not do* what he does not will to do. But that at other times he does *not* have this freedom is made equally evident by the possibility alluded to in the example just given, that on some occasion my arm might be tied down or paralyzed, or might be forcibly pulled up by some external agency. In sum, man, within limits, i.e., in some circumstances and in certain respects, does have *freedom to act as he wills.* The equation which, by dispelling ambiguities, makes this obvious and illuminates the whole subject is: "I now *can* do *A* if I will" = "I now *am free* to do *A* if I will" = "Volition now by me to do *A is now sufficient to cause* occurrence of A."

It is important to notice that this equation applies equally whether the act *A*, as in the instance given, is a bodily act, or whether it happens to be a mental act—for instance, happens to be itself an *act of will*—for it might be objected that, besides willing *to act*, there is also such a thing as willing *to will.* For instance, a person, regretting the weakness of will which has prevented him from giving up some bad habit, might some evening resolve, i.e., will, *to will* firmly the first thing the next morning not to indulge the habit that day. But the above equation applies to this case, where the act willed to be done on the morrow is itself an act of will, just as it applies to the case where the act willed to be done was an act of body. And the outcome is the same: under some circumstances, the evening's resolve will be sufficient to cause the act of will planned for the morrow; and under some circumstances—for instance, if in the morning something occurs to distract the person concerned—the previous evening's resolve will not be sufficient. And this, by the equation, means that sometimes the person can, i.e., is free to, do the willing tomorrow which today he wills to do tomorrow; and sometimes he cannot, i.e., is not free to do it.

If, as this example indicates, such a thing as willing to will sometimes occurs, it might be asked whether then there is also such a thing as willing to will-to-will, etc. The answer would seem to be that this hardly ever occurs, if ever; and still less do willing to will-to-will-to-will, etc. Some psychological contortions, like some bodily ones, are too difficult to be done.

### Determinism Presupposed by "Free Will"

Now, however, comes a thought which will shock anyone who, as commonly is done, has been tacitly assuming that determinism is incompatible with the freedom miscalled "free will." That thought is that man's freedom to act as he wills, which we have shown he certainly has sometimes, does not, even on the occasions when he has it, in the least imply that his *volition*, which causes his act, is itself uncaused. The fact is on the contrary that the volition is itself determined—caused to occur—by some motivating factor, for instance, by some end in view which it will serve, or by the superior attractiveness of one of the alternatives open, or by some other consideration. My volition to raise my arm a moment ago, for example, was determined by my aim at that moment to prove that such a volition would, in the circumstances then existing, suffice to cause the arm to rise. My desire to prove this was itself generated by the questions incident to the discussion in which I was engaged; and so on. Again, when the choice of an apple or a pear is offered to me, my decision to take the apple is determined by my memory that in the past the taste of apples has generally pleased me more than that of pears; or perhaps by the apple's reminding me that "an apple a day keeps the doctor away," etc. Even in the case of a pure gamble, there are causes, if not reasons, for one's decision to bet one way rather than the other. If, for instance, I bet that the next card drawn at random from a standard pack will be red not black, my choice of red is determined by something or other—perhaps, illogically, by the fact that each of several cards in turn, which I had similarly drawn just before, had all been black; or perhaps by the psychologically more stimulating character of red; or perhaps because the idea of red is the one which happens to pop in my mind at the moment I am asked to bet; and so on.

Indeed, to suppose that one's volitions are not determined —either by one's past experiences, or by one's tastes, or by one's purposes, or by the nature of the alternatives offered to one's choice, or by the sort of situation one is in at the time, or by one's beliefs as to right and wrong, or by the difference in the consequences one believes would follow from choice of one rather than another of the courses of action one can embark on if one but wills—to suppose, I say, that one's volition is not determined by any of these considerations nor by any others, is *not* to be supposing that one's volition is then free and responsible, but on the contrary that it is *completely fortuitous, purely random, and therefore wholly irresponsible.* For to be *acting in a morally responsible manner* means precisely that the volitions causing the acts are being *responsive to* —determined by—such considerations as those listed above; and to *treat a person as a morally responsible being* means to be assuming that punishing or rewarding him for something he has done, holding out to him threats or promises if he does certain things, pointing out to him the probable effects of alternative courses of action, and so on, *will be effective* in shaping his future volitions on the relevant kinds of occasions. In any case where this does not happen to be so, as in the insane or in children too young to appreciate causes and effects and to be determined by them, there is no moral responsibility but only historical responsibility, and perhaps legal responsibility for damage caused. Such damages as may be imposed in such cases are then not punitive but simply compensatory. If a person who has committed a crime is brought into court, and it is there established that although such considerations were present to his mind at the time, yet they had no effect on his will, he is not declared to have therefore at the time being exercising "free will," but simply to have been *insane*.

The hypnotic effect of the words "free will," however, and the gratuitous but well-nigh universal assumption that determinism and freedom are mutually exclusive, have led some writers to attempt to avoid determinism by saying that factors of the kinds mentioned do not *determine* volitions, but only *influence* them. Let us suppose, however, that in a given case all those factors have had their full effect, and that this has not been to cause volition to act in a certain manner *A*, but only to cause *inclination* so to will. Volition nevertheless then occurs. It may be to do *A*, or it may be to refrain from doing *A*; but whichever of the two it is, two hypotheses are possible. One is that some additional determinant had then entered and caused the particular volition which actually occurred. The other is that no additional determinant entered. If the latter, then the volition which occurred—whether it was to follow or on the contrary to resist the inclination which had been caused by the totality of the influencing determinants—that volition, *from that point on*, was wholly irresponsible, completely random; for the true opposite of determinism is not freedom but pure fortuity, absolute chance; and, once more, a person whose volitions at a given time were wholly random would not be exercising "free will," but would only be mentally deranged.

The preceding remarks will have made evident that punishment for evil doing is morally defensible only under the assumption that the memory or the example of the punishment is a factor which, among others, does operate to determine the nature of the future volitions of the person punished or of others who witnessed the punishment or otherwise know of it. For if this is not assumed, then punishment is nothing but revenge or a venting of anger or hatred, and is then morally indefensible.

## Determinism, Compulsion, and Predictability

If I will to keep my arm down, but a stronger person grasps and raises it, its movement is then said to be *compelled*—physically compelled; its movement, however, is then not my act since it was not caused by my will but against my will.

But what about a case where, perhaps because of bursitis, I do *not* want to raise my arm, but am told that if I do not raise it I shall be shot; and where, because of this threat, I do raise it? Do I do so then freely? or under compulsion?

The answer is that since even then I choose the alternative I prefer, I am acting freely; but that, because both of the alternatives with which I am confronted are ones to which I am averse, I am acting under duress—under "moral" compulsion; though not under physical compulsion, nor under psychological compulsion if by this be meant such automatic obedience to a command as occurs under hypnosis, or as a result of posthypnotic suggestion, or in psychopathological compulsive states.

Thus, to say as often would be said that, in the situation described and in similar ones, I am acting "against my will" is not really true. What is true is only that I am then acting against my *liking*, though not against my *preference* among the alternatives open to my choice on the occasion. The point is (*a*) that, to act freely is to do what, in the circumstances, one prefers; (*b*) that to do what one prefers is to do the particular act which one likes best *or dislikes least* among those open to one's choice in those circumstances; and (*c*) that although one's volition causes one's act in either case, and is itself determined by the difference in attractiveness or in repulsiveness among the alternatives open, determination by such difference is termed "compulsion," or more specifically "moral compulsion," *when all of the alternatives open are repulsive ones*, even if unequally so; but is not so termed when one at least of the alternatives is attractive, liked, agreeable.

Moral compulsion and freedom of choice are thus perfectly capable of coexisting; for having freedom of choice never means that one can do *anything whatever* which one might will to do. The variety of alternative acts which one can perform if one but will is *always* limited, sometimes more and sometimes less so. This fact may be put picturesquely by saying that freedom is always freedom inside some "jail," but that some jails are more spacious than others. There are always many things which we are not free to do even if we would.

Something may next be said concerning the relation between freedom of choice and predictability of choice. It is sometimes thought that if determinism is a fact—if every event, including human volitions, has some cause—then it is possible, at least theoretically, to predict what a person will chose to do in given circumstances; and therefore his choice will not really have been free.

But the course of action a man chooses in given circumstances is determined not only by the nature of those circumstances, but also by the particular set of dispositions, tastes, past experiences, habits, purposes, impulses, and so on, which together constitute what we may call his particular "volitional nature" at the time; and each of his acts and experiences alters this to some extent—sometimes little, sometimes much. As Royce was fond of pointing out, if one steps on a man's foot and apologizes, and if one then repeats the act exactly, the man's response is likely to be different the second time from what it was the first; for he is a somewhat different man the second time: the first experience has made him different; the second experience has a history the first did not have.

A person's future choice in given circumstances is therefore not completely predictable, even theoretically, unless one knows completely the kind of volitional nature which is now his, and unless in addition it has remained at the future time completely the same as it is now. But neither of these two conditions is ever fully satisfied or satisfiable, since, as pointed out above, each man at every moment is in some degree novel—indeed, unique—in history, and only the stereotyped is strictly predictable. Hence what is true is only that *in so far* as one knows a person's present volitional nature, and *in so far* as it remains unaltered, one can—and in fact does—predict what his choices will be, *in so far* as the circumstances he will eventually face are of the kinds to which such aspects of his volitional nature as will have endured are relevant.

But even this degree of predictability does not mean that his predicted choices will not have been free, for the volitional nature out of which they will proceed at the future time will be that which is *his own* at that time: it will be *his* volition, such as it may be, that determines which act he then performs, and this is what exercising freedom of choice consists in.

It might be objected that, at least in so far as heredity and adventitious environment have determined his volitional nature, he is not historically responsible for what that nature is. But although this is true, he is nevertheless morally responsible now for what he does if punishments and rewards, threats and promises, awareness of circumstances, foresight of consequences, and so on, are now effective in determining how he chooses to act; for *precisely this* is what constitutes being morally responsible for one's acts.[8]

## Is Evil Traceable to Man's Freedom?

Having now reached the point where we are clear not only as to the nature and kinds of evil, but also as to the nature and extent of the freedom, commonly miscalled "free will," which man possesses, we are now in position to judge whether this freedom, or, as Descartes and many theologians have contended, man's misuse of it, is responsible for the evil in the world, or at least for the evil which man does or experiences.

Descartes, it will be recalled, points out that God, without abrogating man's freedom, and without endowing him with infinite understanding, could yet have given him sufficient understanding to perceive always clearly and distinctly what is true, or what is good, on those occasions where he is called upon to judge. As to why God did not do this, Descartes only conjectures that perhaps the world is on this account in some mysterious way better than it otherwise would be. But even if God had endowed man with a degree of understanding always adequate to perceive clearly the true or the good in the situations concerning which he has to make decisions, the freedom with which God did endow man or which somehow man does have would even then have left it possible for man to choose the evil instead of the good, as indeed the malicious man knowingly does now.

What we must now ask is then why some men, or perhaps most men at one time or another, act maliciously, i.e., choose to do things they know to be evil. The answer, obviously, cannot be that it is because they can choose evil if they will or good if they will. It can be only that, in addition to this, their will is, to that extent, *itself evil*, i.e., is such that it has a preference for evil. And the question then arises why God did not, as he could have done, give man not only freedom to act as he wills, but in addition a *good* will; that is, a will which, although not infinitely good, were good enough to choose the good on all occasions where a choice between good and evil confronts him. In brief, just as God could, as Descartes points out, have given man a better understanding, so could God have given man a better will; for, contrary to what seems to be often tacitly assumed, *freedom and goodness are nowise incompatible:* man could perfectly well be free to do evil if he wills, or good if he wills, and yet be such that in fact he never prefers the evil but always the good. That, as Tennant and others have asserted, moral goodness cannot be created as such but has to be evolved, is true enough as pointed out earlier, if man's own creative powers, which are limited, are those in view; but an omnipotent creator certainly could have implanted moral goodness in his creatures, for moral goodness is goodness of intent, goodness of will—charitableness, compassion, kindness; and no contradiction whatever is involved in the idea of such a disposition's being *native* to a person, rather than acquired.

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[8] A fuller and somewhat more technical presentation of the views of freedom, determinism, and responsibility set forth in this chapter may be found in C. J. Ducasse, *Nature, Mind, and Death* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1951), chap. xi.

The upshot of these remarks is that, on the hypothesis that man was created by an omnipotent creator, a man's equipment—his will, noble or malicious; his mind, penetrating or stupid; his body, strong or weak; no less than the freedom, such as he happens to have, to act as he wills—is, all of it, precisely such as that creator equipped him with; and, so far as that equipment—for instance, a malicious instead of a benevolent disposition—is and produces evil, it is such because that creator chose to equip him with an evil trait instead of, as such a creator could have done, with the opposite good trait. Therefore that creator, if omnipotent and omniscient as assumed, cannot be perfectly good also, but must necessarily be to some extent himself malicious. Hence, if a monotheism is what one proposes to believe in if one can, Mill's suggestion to leave the omnipotence, at least, out of the conception of its God, or, to the same ultimate effect, perhaps the omniscience, commends itself highly. For the *goodness* of a monotheistic God—besides possession by him of a reasonable measure of power and of knowledge—is the attribute most essential if he is to be available for religious purposes.

To these considerations may be added the further remark that even if blame for the existence of moral and of intellectual evil could be shifted from man's postulated creator to man's misuse of his freedom; and even if, further, the allegation were defensible more than occasionally that the physical and psychological sufferings of individuals are just punishments for their sinfulness; even then there would remain to be accounted for, and necessarily in some other manner, the evil which the pains of animals constitute.

This, however, could hardly be expected to constitute a difficult problem for theologians who find themselves able to regard the fact that many new born infants undergo acute physical sufferings as divinely just punishment for Adam's and Eve's sinful curiosity concerning the taste of apples.

# Chapter 17

# LIFE AFTER DEATH

The belief in a life after death, like the belief in gods and demons, is religious only when a religion employs it to implement the two tasks—one social and the other personal—which in Chapter 8 we contended it is the distinctive function of religion to perform. Evidently, in order that the belief be useful for this purpose, it is not necessary that it be true but only that it be firmly held and that the kind of *post-mortem* life assumed to await the individual be believed to depend in a just manner on the kind of *ante-mortem* life he has lived.

In the present chapter as in the last, however, the question at issue is not that of religious utility of a belief, but that of its truth or probability of truth. Are there rational or empirical grounds for believing that man's personality survives the death of his body? Or, on the contrary, is the belief in survival purely gratuitous, or perhaps even demonstrably false? This is the question which will now occupy us. It is commonly termed the question as to the immortality of the human soul. But immortality means incapacity to die—everlastingness of life—and it is perfectly conceivable that whatever, if anything, is left of a man's personality when his body dies might continue to exist not forever but only for a finite time, whether long or short. Hence we shall not concern ourselves here with immortality in the above strict sense, but only with the more modest and in any case prior question of survival.

## The Question as to Survival Not Inherently Religious

In itself, the question whether there is for the individual some kind of life after death is as purely a question of fact as, for example, the question whether there is life on Mars or on some other of the heavenly bodies. It is independent of such religious utility as the belief in survival may have. It is independent also of the question whether a God exists: no contradiction is involved in supposing that there is a God but no life after death for man, or in supposing that there is such a life but that no God exists.

Theologians, it is true, have sometimes contended that the goodness of God guarantees survival: "If God is good and God is sufficiently powerful, how can such a God allow the values (potential or actual) bound up with individuals to become forever lost?" [1] Again, it has been urged that a future life is necessary if the many injustices of the present life are to be redressed; and that morality would be irrational if the moral man were not eventually to find happiness. But, let it be noted, the conclusion that there is a future life is based in each of these arguments only on an "*if*"; and, for aught we can prove to the contrary, the fact may be that these "ifs" are not satisfied—that a God does not exist, or is not good enough or not powerful enough to give man immortality; or that justice does not ultimately reign in the universe; or that morality is ultimately irrational. Of course, most persons refuse to entertain such distressing suppositions, but they might nonetheless represent the actual facts, for facts do not wait either on man's belief or on his welcome.

Moreover, that annihilation of the individual at death would be an evil is anything but evident. For if all men *are* annihilated at death, only God knows that man's *ante-mortem* hopes of immortality are not fulfilled; and, since they were not God's hopes but man's, God is not disappointed at their nonfulfilment; but neither is man disappointed by it, since, if he does not exist after death at all, he cannot then experience either disappointment or anything else whatever. Thus, man's annihilation would not *itself* distress anybody and would therefore not be an evil. What actually distresses some persons and therefore is an evil, is only the *idea* that they or their loved ones may not survive death, and *this distress* is a fact even if there is a life after death.

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[1] Vergilius Ferm, *First Chapters in Religious Philosophy* (New York: Round Table Press, 1937), p. 279.

The large "ifs," on which the would-be proofs of survival mentioned above base their conclusion, evidently have the status not of facts known, but only of hopes entertained regarding the nature of the universe. Hence those "proofs" are actually nothing but pieces of wishful thinking decked out in a skin of logic.

On the other hand, it is conceivable that a person's *desire* to survive death, or his indifference or aversion to such survival, might in itself be a cause sufficient somehow to determine whether he will or will not survive. But evidently, the question as to what determines survival or nonsurvival if survival is not automatic, does not arise unless or until one knows that survival is at least sometimes a fact. And persons educated in the natural sciences widely believe not only that no case of survival is known, but also that the possibility of survival is positively ruled out by certain scientific facts. These are what we must next consider.

### The Contention That No Life After Death Is Possible

There are, first of all, a number of facts which definitely suggest that both the existence and the nature of consciousness wholly depend on the presence of a functioning nervous system. It is pointed out, for example, that wherever consciousness is observed, it is found associated with a living and functioning body. Further, when the body dies, or the head is struck a heavy blow, or some anesthetic is administered, the familiar outward evidences of consciousness terminate, permanently or temporarily. Again, we know well that drugs of various kinds—alcohol, caffein, opium, heroin, and many others—cause specific changes at the time in the nature of a person's mental states. Also, by stimulating in appropriate ways the body's sense organs, corresponding states of consciousness—namely, the various kinds of sensations—can be caused at will. On the other hand, cutting a sensory nerve immediately eliminates a whole range of sensations. Again, the contents of consciousness, the mental powers, or even the personality, are modified in characteristic ways when certain regions of the brain are destroyed by disease or injury or are disconnected from the rest by such an operation as prefrontal lobotomy. And that the nervous system is the indispensable basis of mind is further suggested by the fact that, in the evolutionary scale, the degree of intelligence of various species of animals keeps pace closely with the degree of development of their brain.

That continued existence of mind after death is impossible has been argued also on the basis of theoretical considerations. It has been contended, for instance, that what we call states of consciousness—or more particularly ideas, sensations, volitions, feelings, and the like—are really nothing but the minute physical or chemical events which take place in the tissues of the brain. For, it is urged, it would be absurd to suppose that an idea or a volition, if it is not itself a material thing or process, could cause material effects such as contractions of muscles. Moreover, it is maintained that the possibility of causation of a material event by an immaterial mental cause is ruled out *a priori* by the principle of the conservation of energy; for such causation would mean that an additional quantity of energy suddenly pops into the nervous system out of nowhere.

Another conception of consciousness, which is more often met with today than the one just mentioned, but which also implies that consciousness cannot survive death, is that "consciousness" is only the name we give to certain types of behavior, which differentiate the higher animals from all other things in nature. According to this view, to say, for example, that an animal is conscious of a difference between two stimuli means nothing more than that it responds to each by different behavior. That is, the difference of *behavior* is what consciousness of difference between the stimuli *consists in*; and is not, as is commonly assumed, only the behavioral *sign* of something mental and not public, called "consciousness that the stimuli are different."

Or again, consciousness, of the typically human sort called thought, is identified with the typically human form of behavior called speech; and this, again not in the sense that speech *expresses* or *manifests* something different from itself called "thought," but in the sense that speech—whether uttered or only whispered—*is* thought itself. And obviously, if thought, or any mental activity, is thus but some mode of behavior of the living body, the mind cannot possibly survive death.

Still another difficulty confronting the hypothesis that life continues after death becomes evident as soon as one asks what anyway, is specifically meant in that hypothesis by "life." In its ordinary usage, both of two things are meant by the word. One is the physiological processes which differentiate a living body from a dead one. The other is the cognitive and emotional experiences, and the voluntary activities, which differentiate a conscious living body from an unconscious living one. This second thing, evidently, is the one essentially in view when *post-mortem* "life" is spoken of. But the conscious experiences of a man ultimately arise out of stimulations of his body's sense organs by the material objects, including other human bodies, which constitute its environment; and many of man's voluntary activities consist of, or require, acts of his body upon that material environment. It would seem, then, that life cannot possibly continue, in the second any more than in the first of the two senses just distinguished, without the body and the material environment on which it depends. Is any meaning at all, then, left to the word "life" when one speaks of a life after death? [2]

## The Impossibility of Survival Not Proved

Such, in brief, are the chief reasons commonly offered for holding that the mind or personality of a man cannot possibly survive the death of his body. Let us now ask whether those arguments do indeed prove this, or if not, whether they at least show survival to be improbable.

To be considered first is the assertion that "thought," or "consciousness," is but another name for subvocal speech, or for some other form of behavior, or for molecular processes in the tissues of the brain. As Paulsen and others have pointed out,[3] no evidence ever is or can be offered to support that assertion, because it is in fact but a disguised proposal to make the words "thought," "feeling," "sensation," "desire," and so on, denote facts quite different from those which these words are commonly employed to denote. To say that those words are but other names for certain chemical, neural, or behavioral events is as grossly arbitrary and as futile as it would be to say that "wood" is but another name for glass, or "potato" but another name for cabbage. What thought, desire, sensation, and other mental states are like, each of us can observe directly by introspection; and what introspection reveals is that they do not in the least resemble muscular contraction, or glandular secretion, or any other known bodily events. No tampering with language can alter the observable fact that thinking is one thing and muttering quite another; that the feeling called anger has no resemblance to the bodily behavior which usually goes with it; or that an act of will is not in the least like anything we find when we open the skull and examine the brain. Certain mental events are doubtless connected in some way with certain bodily events, but they are not those bodily events themselves. The connection is not identity.

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[2] Gardner Murphy, "Difficulties Confronting the Survival Hypothesis," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, XXXIX (April, 1945), 72; Corliss Lamont, *The Illusion of Immortality* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), pp. 26 ff.

[3] F. Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. F. Thilly (2d ed.; New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1906), pp. 82–83.

This being clear, let us next consider the arguments offered to show that mental processes, although not identical with bodily processes, nevertheless totally depend on them. We are told, for instance, that some head injuries, or anesthetics, totally extinguish consciousness for the time being. The strict fact, however, is only that the usual bodily signs of consciousness are then absent. But they are also absent when a person is asleep; and yet, at such a time, dreams, which are states of consciousness, may be occurring.

It is true that when the person concerned awakens, he often remembers his dreams, whereas the person who has been anesthetized or injured has usually no memories relating to the period of apparent blankness. But this could mean that his consciousness was, for the time, dissociated from its ordinary channels of manifestation, as was the case with the co-conscious personalities of some of the patients of Dr. Morton Prince.[4] Moreover, it sometimes occurs that a person who has been in an accident reports lack of memories not only for the period during which his body was unresponsive but also for a period of several hours *before* the accident, during which he had given to his associates all the ordinary external signs of being conscious as usual.

But, more generally, if absence of memories relating to a given period proved unconsciousness for that period, this would force us to conclude that we were unconscious during the first few years of our lives, and indeed have been unconscious also most of the time since; for the fact is that we have no memories whatever of most of our days. That we were alive and conscious on any long past specific date is, with only a few exceptions, not something we actually remember, but only something which we infer must have been true.

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[4] Morton Prince, ed., *My Life as a Dissociated Personality*, by B. C. A. (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1909). Introduction by Morton Prince.

Let us now turn to another of the arguments against survival. That states of consciousness entirely depend on bodily processes, and therefore cannot continue when the latter have ceased, is proved, it is contended, by the fact that various states of consciousness—in particular, the several kinds of sensations—can be caused at will by appropriately stimulating the body.

Now, it is very true that sensations and some other mental states can be so caused; but we have just as good and abundant evidence that mental states can cause various bodily events. Laird mentions, among others, the fact that merely willing to raise one's arm normally suffices to cause it to rise; that a hungry person's mouth is caused to water by the idea of food; that feelings of rage, fear, or excitement cause digestion to stop; that anxiety causes changes in the quantity and quality of the milk of a nursing mother; that certain thoughts cause tears, pallor, blushing, or fainting; and so on.[5] The evidence we have that the relation is one of cause and effect is exactly the same here as where bodily processes are asserted to cause mental states.

It is said, of course, that to suppose something nonphysical, such as a thought, to be capable of causing motion of a physical object, such as the body, is absurd. But I submit that if the heterogeneity of mind and matter makes this absurd, then it makes equally absurd the causation of mental states by stimulation of the body. Yet no absurdity is commonly found in the assertion that cutting the skin causes a feeling of pain, or that alcohol, caffein, bromides, and other drugs, cause characteristic states of consciousness. As David Hume made clear long ago, no kind of causal connection is intrinsically absurd. Anything might cause anything; and only observation can tell us what in fact can cause what.

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[5] John Laird, *Our Minds and Their Bodies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), pp. 16–19.

Somewhat similar remarks would apply to the allegation that the principle of the conservation of energy precludes the possibility of causation of a physical event by a mental event. For if it does, then it equally precludes causation in the converse direction, and this, of course, would leave us totally at a loss to explain the occurrence of sensations. But, as Keeton and others have pointed out,[6] that energy is conserved is not something observation has revealed or could reveal, but only a postulate—a defining postulate for the notion of an "isolated physical system." That is, conservation of energy is something one has to have if, but only if, one insists on conceiving the physical world as wholly self-contained, independent, isolated. And just because the metaphysics which the natural sciences tacitly assume does insist on so conceiving the physical world, this metaphysics compels them to save conservation by postulations *ad hoc* whenever dissipation of energy is what observation reveals. It postulates, for instance, that something else, which appears at such times but was not until then regarded as energy, is energy too, but, it is then said, "in a different form."

Furthermore, as Broad has emphasized, all that the principle of conservation requires is that when a quantity $Q$ of energy disappears at one place in the physical world an equal quantity of it should appear at some other place there. And the supposition that, in some cases, what causes it to disappear here and appear there is some mental event, such perhaps as a volition, does not violate at all the supposition that energy is conserved.[7]

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[6] M. T. Keeton, "Some Ambiguities in the Theory of the Conservation of Energy," *Philosophy of Science*, VIII, No. 3 (July, 1941).

A word, next, on the parallelism between the degree of development of the nervous systems of various animals and the degree of their intelligence. This is alleged to prove that the latter is the product of the former. But the facts lend themselves equally well to the supposition that, on the contrary, an obscurely felt need for greater intelligence in the circumstances the animal faced was what brought about the variations which eventually resulted in a more adequate nervous organization.

In the development of the individual, at all events, it seems clear that the specific, highly complex nerve connections which become established in the brain and cerebellum of, for instance, a skilled pianist are the results of his will over many years to acquire the skill.

We must not forget in this context that there is a converse, equally consistent with the facts, to the theory—called epiphenomenalism—that mental states are related to the brain much as the halo is to the saint, that is, as effects but never themselves as causes. The converse theory, which might be called hypophenomenalism, and which is pretty well that of Schopenhauer, is that the instruments which the various mechanisms of the body constitute are the objective products of obscure cravings for the corresponding powers; and, in particular, that the organization of the nervous system is the effect and material isomorph of the variety of mental functions exercised at a given level of animal or human existence.

## Why the Arguments Against Survival Seemed Weighty

We have now examined all but the last of the reasons cited earlier for judging survival impossible; and we have found that none of them establishes the alleged impossibility or even bears on the probability or improbability of survival.

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[7] C. D. Broad, *The Mind and Its Place in Nature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1929), pp. 103 ff.

Yet, at first sight, those reasons appeared weighty; and it may be that even after our criticisms of them, a certain aura of impressiveness still clings to them. If so, this indicates that we have not yet gained the philosophical detachment indispensable for a completely objective view of the question. We gain this detachment only when we have perceived what exactly it is, which makes those reasons seem to have the force they really lack.

The source of their appearance of weight is a certain tacit major premise under which they automatically present themselves to us, namely, that only material things can have substantive, self-dependent existence; or, in other words, that *to exist at all is to be some part of or process in the material world.*

But a moment's reflection is enough to show that this conception of existence is perfectly arbitrary, as being not a hypothesis, capable of being tested and proved true or false, but merely a specification of the particular range of existence to which the sciences called "natural sciences" choose to confine their interest. That conception of existence simply marks off their particular horizon: the "natural" sciences are those which take as their specific and sole task to investigate the constituents and processes of the material world, and their relations to one another.

Hence, to make clear the true import of the statement italicized above, it is necessary to qualify it accordingly, making it read: *For the natural sciences,* to exist is to be some part of or process in the material world.

But in our days the natural sciences have made enormous progress. It is to them that we owe the marvellous modern achievements in transportation, communication, engineering, manufacture, sanitation, medicine, agriculture, and so on, which have revolutionized the life of man wherever they have spread. Because of this the natural sciences now have immense prestige—so much prestige that not only the average man in our cities, but also the majority of natural scientists, and indeed even some philosophers, who should know better, today take these particular sciences to be all that the word "science" really denotes; and hence tacitly assume that the material world, which in fact is the subject matter of only these sciences, is all there is to be explored.

It follows from this psychological state of affairs that when natural scientific considerations of the kinds we mentioned are presented, which seem to preclude the possibility of man's mind surviving death, the mere fact of their belonging to the domain of the natural sciences tacitly carries with it, *and induces us unawares to assume,* the materialistic premise pointed out above. But although, as we have seen, that premise correctly defines the horizon of the natural sciences and is therefore absolutely valid *within* those sciences, yet it is valid *only within them.* And if the qualification we indicated, which is necessary to remind us of this, is not kept constantly in view, then that materialistic premise falsely seems to have universal validity and hence to rule out *a priori* the possibility that minds too are capable of substantive, independent existence, so that minds then can be only aspects or "functions" of certain parts of the material world—specifically, of the bodies of animals and men.

That materialistic major premise, then, tacitly injecting itself unqualified at the top of the natural-scientific considerations cited, and accepted by us unawares without its necessary qualification, was the source of the deceptive appearance of force those considerations possessed.

It is essential here to be perfectly clear as to this. The ordinary emotional denunciations of "materialism" by believers in survival are futile because they fail to make evident the fact just pointed out. One is not psychologically in position to perceive that fact unless he has first done full justice to the material sciences—acknowledging the vastness and enormous importance of their achievements and their mastery of the methods that are fruitful for investigation of the material world. For it is only when one has achieved a quite definite conception of what the material sciences undertake, that one is in position to discern with equal definiteness what else there is, which is foreign to *their* undertaking and which therefore *they* rightly ignore; but which exists nonetheless and is just as capable as is the material world of being scientifically observed and investigated—namely, the facts of mind. These, however, are not accessible to external perception but only to introspective observation, for the latter alone exhibits mental states and activities *themselves,* instead of—as does perceptual observation of the body—only the *bodily signs* of certain mental states and activities.

Because the point made in this section as to the limitedness of the scope of the natural sciences is a somewhat subtle one and yet is crucial, it will be worth while now to restate it in different terms.

### What the "Disproofs" of the Possibility of Survival Amount To

Every game has its rules, which are binding so long as the game one chooses to play is the particular game which a given set of rules defines. For example, if the game one elects to engage in is tennis, then, under its rules, use of a racket is obligatory, and use of a hockey stick, golf club or baseball bat is tacitly forbidden.

There are, however, not only athletic games, games of chance, parlor games, and so on, but also heuristic games, i.e., games of discovery. These are the various sciences. Histology would be one of them. Not its rules directly, but, together with them, the nature of the subject matter it proposes to investigate, make the use in it of a microscope obligatory, and tacitly rule out as incongruous the use, for instance, of a telescope. If astronomy, on the contrary, is the heuristic game one chooses to play, then the telescope is what one is obligated to employ. And so on with the other sciences.

More generally, if the game in which one elects to engage is any one of the *natural* sciences, then the mode of observation which alone is congruous with their subject matter is *perceptual observation of public facts*; for "natural science" is the name of the game of discovering all that can be discovered *by observation of this particular kind* and by rational systematization of the facts so observed.

But there are other heuristic games besides the natural sciences. Mathematics, for instance, is another. The facts concerning which it seeks to make discoveries are not those which perceptual observation exhibits: nothing that the nose, the tongue, the eye, the ear, or the skin perceives is part of the subject matter of mathematics. Mathematicians, it is true, use mathematical symbols, and these are perceptually public objects—marks on paper or on a blackboard. But these objects, which are material, are not what the game called "mathematics" requires its player to observe—else mathematical discoveries would be made by looking at the symbols with a magnifying glass, measuring them, analyzing the ink of which they consist, etc. What the mathematicians must observe instead is the *concepts* which those symbols stand for, and the logical relations among those concepts. And, for observation of objects of this kind, sense perception is neither necessary nor practicable, nor indeed relevant at all. The kind of observation called for instead is *logical* observation—intellectual observation of relations such as implication, consistency, contradiction, and so on. The material, perceptually public symbols written on paper are merely a pragmatic aid to the memory and a means of communication.

Now, analogously, when the heuristic game one chooses to play is that of observing and classifying the various psychological states and activities *themselves,* and of discovering their *psychological* relations *to one another,* the mode of observation which is then alone congruous, and is obligatory, is the one called "introspection"; for no other gives *direct* access to the kind of states and activities one has elected to investigate. In *this* game, then, the mode of observation called "sense perception," and the kind of objects—namely material objects—which are the only ones sense perception exhibits, are irrelevant, except, like pen and paper in mathematics, as pragmatic aids.

The upshot of these remarks on games and on the rules which define them thus turns out to be the same as that of the reflections set forth in the preceding section. It is that if one lays down *ab initio* for the game one proposes to play the rule that to exist shall mean to be some part or process of the material world, i.e., of the perceptually public world, then, *but only then,* it follows that if one nevertheless goes on using the words which ordinarily denote the states and activities which only introspection reveals, namely, mental ones, he is forced by the rule of his chosen game to make those words denote, instead of mental events, something or other that perception of the material world exhibits. For instance, certain modes of behavior such as speech and response to speech, or certain physiological events in the nervous system, or some other activity peculiar like these to such material bodies as have minds. In short, that initial, freely chosen materialistic rule, *but nothing else,* compels one to pretend that two different things, namely, mental states on the one hand, and on the other the *bodily signs* of mental states, are not two but are one identical thing—and that one thing, the latter.

And of course, when it is thus tacitly begged from the very outset that mental states and activities are some species of bodily states and activities, then, *but only then,* it automatically follows that they cannot continue after the body disintegrates.

This, and nothing more at all, is what the natural-scientific "disproofs" of the possibility of survival amount to.

But, of course, to show as we have now done that the alleged impossibility of survival has not in the least been established is not to have shown that survival is positively possible. To show the latter, several things are needed. One is an empirical account of what a mind is. Another is that the supposition that minds, like bodies, have substantive existence, be consistent with that account. But nothing we have yet said has even attempted to provide such an account and to prove such consistency.

Unfortunately, the task of doing so is far too long and technical to be undertaken here, involving as it does an analysis of the notions of substance, of substantive existence, and of capacities of substances; and a classification of such capacities. The present writer has addressed himself to it at length in another book, to which the interested reader must be referred.[8] A bare summary of the results of the analysis presented there is all that can be given here. They are, that the nature of a substance, of whatever kind, analyzes exhaustively into a complex of capacities, i.e., of causal connections between events of certain kinds and events of certain other kinds; that some of the capacities of material substances are physico-physical capacities, i.e., are causal connections between one kind of *physical* event and another kind of *physical* event; that minds too are substances in the generic sense, that is, that the nature of a mind also analyzes exhaustively into a complex of capacities; but that, in the case of minds, some of their capacities are psycho-psychical, i.e., are causal connections between one kind of *psychical* event and another kind of *psychical* event; and therefore that mental activities of such kinds as involve exercise only of a mind's *psycho-psychical* capacities do not theoretically require that the mind performing them be occupying a body at the time. This means that survival, conceived as continuation after death of a mind's exercise of its *psycho-psychical* capacities, is conceivable without internal contradiction, i.e., is theoretically possible.

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[8] C. J. Ducasse, *Nature, Mind, and Death* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1951). See especially chaps. x, xiv, xvi, xvii.

Assuming, as we shall for present purposes, that these several contentions have been adequately established in the treatise mentioned, two tasks now remain for us. One of them, called for by the objection that no kind of life without a body is imaginable, is to describe the variety of forms which survival, if it should be not merely possible theoretically, but actually a fact, could conceivably take. The other is to examine the empirical evidence which has been held by a number of investigators to prove survival. We now turn to the first of these two tasks.

### Forms Which Survival Might Conceivably Take

The simplest form which a consciousness surviving bodily death could conceivably take would be that of some simple, unchanging feeling or other mental state. If it should happen to be the blissful sort of state attained in the mystic ecstasy, of which the theistic mystics speak as "union with God," then such survival could well be described as enjoyment of heavenly bliss; and, if indeed changeless, then—since consciousness of time depends on consciousness of some change—it would be eternal in the sense of timeless, whether or not it were external also in the sense of enduring forever from the point of view of some external spectator experiencing passage of time. If on the contrary the content of the persisting consciousness happened to be a single, changeless feeling of pain or anguish then such survival could be described as experience of the torment of Hell; and it too, for the same reason as before, would be eternal at least in the sense of timeless.

Of course, if survival should be a fact and consist of one changeless state of consciousness, there is no reason to suppose that this would be a state of either bliss or anguish, rather than some other, more or less indifferent—for instance, intuition of green color, or of some tone, or of salty taste, or of the image of a tree or a person, etc. Nor is there any reason why such survival as there may be should take at all the form of some single conscious state.

A different and more plausible form would be that exemplified by dreams; that is, a succession of feelings and of involuntary images of dramatic situations, subjectively originated, and automatically accepted as reality. For a dream, of course, is "a mere dream" only from the standpoint of the person who has awakened out of it. So long as the dream lasts, it is reality for the dreamer. Hence, if a person who is dreaming were able to report his dream while it is going on, without awaking, many of the events he would report would be quite similar to those of ordinary life; for instance, eating, drinking, smoking, seeing and speaking with friends, traveling, and so on.

Some of the communications purporting to come from the dead, which are given out by automatists or so-called mediums, do report precisely such episodes, and this has been regarded as definite evidence that they cannot possibly be correct; for how can a soul or spirit without a physical body smoke a cigar, or drink a whiskey-and-soda? But in our dreams, we all perceive ourselves doing precisely such things, although our bodies are at the time doing nothing of the sort. Hence such communications, if really emanating from the dead, would, so far as they go, support the hypothesis that the *post-mortem* consciousness is dream-consciousness.

Still another form, which survival of consciousness might assume, would be that of reflective reminiscence. It would involve, as dream consciousness does not, the exercise of critical judgment. It would consist in reviewing one's earthly memories, whether partial as ordinarily, or having perhaps been subconsciously preserved *in toto*. It would include attempts to trace causes and effects among the acts and experiences reviewed; also, evaluation of these as judged in this comprehensive and now purely spectatorial perspective; and extraction in this manner from the memories of one's past life of such lessons in wisdom as may be latent in them.

Yet another form, but one inventive instead of only oneiric or reflective, which consciousness after death might have, would be that of creative activity in such fields as mathematics, philosophy, poetry, music, art, or drama, which, on the basis of the stock of knowledge accumulated during one's life on earth, could to some extent be carried on purely in terms of mental images and concepts, without need of stimuli from or of operation upon an independent environment.

But there is no *a priori* reason why the several forms of mental life just described might not, in a discarnate existence if there be such, be combined, as in fact they now are in our incarnate existence. Even the first of the forms suggested could enter into the combination just as it now does in the lives of mystics; for, as pointed out above, although one's experience, so long as no change occurs in it, is eternal in the sense of nontemporal, such nontemporal states in the experience of mystics are themselves only temporary.

The forms of hypothetical *post-mortem* consciousness so far considered have all been of wholly subjective sorts, but there is no reason why some objective elements also might not come into them. For example, impressions caused, as our sensations and some of our emotions now are, by events in an environment independent of the individual's mind. Minds other than his own would constitute a part, if perhaps not the whole, of such an environment; and telepathy, or clairvoyance, which are known to occur sometimes even during life in the body, might enable one mind to perceive the images and conceptions created by other minds; and perhaps also to operate volitionally upon them in some cases. They would then be objects virtually public, as material objects now are for us;

but public telepathically or clairvoyantly instead of, like material objects, public to observation by the bodily sense organs. It is interesting to notice that, if the images concerned were not only of colors, but also of sounds, warmth, cold, pressure and the other familiar qualities, and obeyed fixed laws, then we should have exactly the same reasons we now have to call our environment "material," although the objects composing it might well be of very novel kinds, or behave in novel ways.

Still another possibility is that survival should take the form of rebirth of the individual in another material human body, whether on earth or on some other planet. This form of survival might or might not be combined with one or more of those we have just considered. That is, following death, consciousness in one or more of the forms described might continue for a longer or shorter period—days, months, years, or perhaps centuries—and the "soul" then be reborn in a new human body. Or on the contrary, the "soul" might, immediately after leaving its body at death, enter another whether at some time in the latter's prenatal condition, or at its birth.

The belief in survival as rebirth in some other body, animal or human, is widespread in the East; and, in some of its forms, a number of eminent philosophers in the West have regarded it as plausible. To make the rebirth hypothesis precise, however, it is necessary to specify what exactly it supposes to be reborn, and this is not easy. For since the mind of the adult comprises much in the way of knowledge, habits, attitudes, memories, and capacities, which we know very well were not possessed by the child at birth but were acquired since then, such stock of mental furniture of an earlier life cannot be what was reborn in one's present life. What then is it, which is supposed to be brought to the new birth? The only answer to suggest itself is that the latent particular aptitudes and proclivities with which each child is born, could be what it owes to earlier lives; for example, high or low musical, mathematical, artistic, literary, philosophical, or other mental aptitudes. The memories, attitudes, skills, habits, and knowledge acquired between birth and death certainly are not reborn. If anything is, it could be only such residuum as the experiences and activities of one life may leave in the form of new aptitudes or of modifications of old ones.

But obviously the question arises whether the child's native stock of aptitudes is not attributable to heredity rather than to inheritance from earlier lives; for, in general, peculiar aptitudes and some other native traits tend to run in families. For several generations in the family of Johann Sebastian Bach, for instance, there had been unusually gifted musicians; and many other instances could be cited.

The distinguished recent British philosopher, McTaggart—who regards rebirth as the most plausible form of survival—considers the heredity explanation of innate aptitudes, and argues that the rebirth explanation of them is not incompatible with the facts of heredity. He points out that men's hats generally fit their heads far more closely than would be the case if the hats had been assigned to them at random; and yet that hats are very seldom made to order. The correspondence between head and hat "comes about by each man selecting, from hats made without any special reference to his particular head, the hat which will suit his particular head best." Similarly, McTaggart points out, "it would be possible to hold that a man whose nature had certain characteristics when he was about to be reborn, would be reborn in a body descended from ancestors of a similar character," for such a body would fit his nature better than most others. He does not suggest that the man would shop around for such a body and select it consciously, but rather that something analogous to chemical affinities might be what operates to bring the two together.[9] The rebirth hypothesis is thus seen not to be incompatible with the facts of heredity. Indeed, it would supplement these since it would account—as heredity does not—for the cases of geniuses born in families where no such favorable antecedents as existed in the Bach family are discernible.

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[9] John McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1906), p. 125.

The variety of theoretically possible forms of survival described in the present section is sufficient to dispose of the contention noticed earlier, that no kind of *post-mortem* life is concretely imaginable.

## The Empirical Facts Alleged to Prove Survival

When one has familiarized himself with the abundant well-established facts, of various kinds, which are held by some to constitute empirical proof of survival, but are regarded by others as insufficient to prove it, he realizes that the truly crucial question on the subject is as to just what evidence, if it could be had, would establish survival beyond possibility of rational doubt; for the facts available in evidence are of the very kinds which would naturally suggest themselves to most of us as appropriate to establish it.

We shall now give a brief account of the chief kinds of those facts and a summary description of some concrete instances of them; and we shall also mention interpretations of them, alternative to the survival interpretation, which have been advanced as possible. The reader will thereby be given some idea of the facts he has to take into consideration if he is to form an intelligent opinion of his own as to whether survival has been proved. The account which follows borrows to some extent from a fuller discussion of the same subject by Murphy in two excellent articles, "An Outline of Survival Evidence" and "Difficulties Confronting the Survival Hypothesis," which interested persons should not fail to read.[10]

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[10] *Jour., Am. Soc. for Psych. Research*, XXXIX, Nos. 1, 2 (January and April, 1945). See also No. 4, 1945, where, in an article, "Field Theory and Survival," Prof. Murphy sets forth his own formulation of the issues.

The *prima facie* evidences of survival that are psychologically most impressive probably are those consisting of apparitions. The apparition may be that of a person who is dying or has just died, to others unaware that he was ill or in danger; or it may be apparition of a person known to have died but revealing facts unknown to the percipient. Psychologically, apparitions in either of these cases would come under the heading of "veridical hallucinations"—a hallucination being a pseudo perception, i.e., a perception of presence of a person or other object where in fact no such object is physically present, but where the perception is indistinguishable at the time by the percipient from an ordinary sense perception. Dreams, of course, are a species of hallucination we all have, but the hallucinations designated Apparitions are usually waking hallucinations. A hallucination, whether waking or oneiric, is termed veridical if the information it conveys is both highly specific in one respect or another, and correct.

In 1889, the Society for Psychical Research undertook a Census of Hallucinations.[11] Some 17,000 persons were asked whether, when believing themselves completely awake, they had ever had a vivid impression of seeing or being touched by a living being or inanimate object or of hearing a voice, which impression, so far as they could discover, was not due to any external physical cause. Of these persons, 1,684, i.e., 9.9 per cent, answered affirmatively. Many of their hallucinations concerned death. On the basis of the then death rate in England, the probability that a person picked at random would die on a given day was 1 in 19,000. This meant that if apparitions of the dying or just dead had no causal connection with the death, such apparitions would be veridical only about once in 19,000 cases. But their actual rate of veridicality turned out to be vastly greater than this, namely, 1 in 43, i.e., 440 in 19,000, the apparition being regarded as veridical if it occurred within 12 hours of the death. This result, so far as it went, was evidence that a person's being at the point of death or having just died had something to do with occurrence of veridical hallucinations of his presence in friends or relatives at a distance. That the "spirit" of the dead or dying person detaches itself from his body, travels to the distant friend, and there somehow clothes itself for a moment with some tenuous but visible simulacrum of its body, is more or less what an apparition that turns out to have been veridical is tacitly assumed by most percipients of it to have meant. But an alternative interpretation of the apparition would be that the dying person's conscious or subconscious thought of and longing for his friend simply affects the friend's mind "telepathically"—meaning, by telepathy, communication without use of the bodily organs of expression and of sensation. That telepathy, or some other form of extrasensory perception virtually equivalent to it, sometimes occurs between living persons has been demonstrated by appropriate independent experiments; and, on the principle that the causes appealed to as explanation of a novel phenomenon should, if possible, be *verae causae*, i.e., be causes already known to exist and to be capable of causing phenomena more or less similar to the one in need of explanation, the second of those two interpretations of apparitions has been urged by critical students of the evidence as preferable.

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[11] *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research,* X (1889), 25–422. A brief summary of the procedure employed and of the results may be found in F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1903), Vol. I, pp. 570–74.

Certain other apparitions, however, do not, for one or another of a variety of reasons, lend themselves so readily to the telepathy interpretation. Examples would be apparitions occurring a considerable time after the death of the person appearing. One such case is that of a traveling salesman who was busy writing up his orders in his room at the hotel in St. Joseph, Missouri. "I suddenly became conscious," his report reads, "that someone was sitting on my left, with one arm resting on the table. Quick as a flash I turned and distinctly saw the form of my dead sister," who had died nine years before. Whereupon the apparition vanished. So impressed was he that, instead of continuing his trip, he took the next train to St. Louis, his home, and there related to his parents what had occurred, mentioning among other details of the apparition "a bright red line or scratch on the right-hand side of [his] sister's face." When he mentioned this, his mother rose tremblingly to her feet and declared that she herself had made that scratch accidentally after the sister's death, and that, pained at the disfiguration, she had immediately obliterated all trace of it with powder and had never mentioned it to anyone.[12]

Another famous case is that of a father whose apparition in several dreams to one of his sons some time after death revealed to him the existence and location of an unsuspected second will, benefiting him, which, upon being then looked for, was found as indicated.[13] Still another case would be the report by General Barter, then a subaltern in the British Army in India, of the apparition to him of a lieutenant he had not seen for two or three years. The lieutenant's apparition was riding a brown pony with black mane and tail. He was much stouter than at their last meeting, and, whereas formerly clean-shaven, he now wore a peculiar beard in the form of a fringe encircling his face. On inquiry the next day from a person who had known the lieutenant at the time he died, it turned out that he had indeed become very bloated before his death; that he had grown just such a beard while on the sick list; and that he had some time before bought and eventually ridden to death a pony of that very description.[14]

Other striking instances are those of an apparition seen simultaneously by several persons. It is on record that an apparition of a child who, it turned out, had just died, was perceived first by a dog, that the animal's rushing at it, loudly barking, interrupted the conversation of the seven persons present in the room, thus drawing their attention to the apparition, and that the latter then moved through the room for some fifteen seconds, followed by the barking dog.[15]

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[12] The case, with the supporting documents, may be found in Myers, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 27–30; and in Sir Ernest Bennett, *Apparitions and Haunted Houses* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1939), pp. 145–50.

[13] *Proceedings, S.P.R.*, XXXVI (1926–28), 517–24.

[14] Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–35.

There are cases on record also of apparitions of some person unknown to the percipient, but identified later. One instance is that of the apparition one night to a man in a hotel, of a young man of whom he had never heard, who had died in that room some months before. He described the apparition the next morning to another guest in the hotel, who recognized the young man from the description; and, some days later, he recognized the latter's features in a photograph then shown him.[16]

One consideration which weighs against the possibility of taking apparitions as being actual visitations by the "spirit" whose former body they resemble is that other things besides the appearance of the dead person are seen in these apparitions; for instance, in the lieutenant's case, his horse; in some cases, buildings no longer existent; and always, clothing such as the person concerned used to wear, since the apparitions are seldom if ever naked. Hence, as someone has put the point, "if ghosts have clothes, then clothes have ghosts"; and this, it would seem, notwithstanding that in the traveling salesman's case, the dress his sister's apparition wore, which he remembered very well, still existed in a trunk at home. Are the apparitions, then, memory images left behind by the dead—images of themselves and of their clothing somehow become visible later for a moment to another person? One difficulty in the way of even this strange supposition is that the views of one's self, of which one can have memory images, are never—as on the contrary are those the apparitions give—views from the angle of an external observer: the lieutenant, for example, never could have actually seen, *appearing around the bend of a bridle path*, first his own hat, and then his own head and body under it, on a horse; which is the sequence of what General Barter saw.

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[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 334–37.

[16] *Proceedings, S.P.R.*, V (1888–89), 416–17.

The question as to what apparitions really are is still more puzzling in the case of fully materialized apparitions, such as the reported apparition of Jesus to his disciples after his death, or the far more recent and better evidenced apparition of "Katie King" to Sir Wm. Crookes, to Florence Marryat, and to many other persons. That bodily "resurrection" of the surviving spirit of a person who has died is not the only possible interpretation of even such extraordinary and *prima facie* impressive cases even if genuineness of their occurrence is granted, has been plausibly argued by, for instance, Flournoy; but it is not possible to introduce here the extensive and detailed material, without careful consideration of which intelligent speculation as to the nature of such apparitions is impossible.[17]

To the preceding remarks concerning apparitions of the dead, however, it is appropriate to add a few words regarding their similarity to apparitions of the living. Hornell Hart has pointed out that these too appear clothed as ordinarily; that both "adjust themselves to the physical surroundings in which they appear, as by passing through doorways, sitting in chairs," etc.; that both also sometimes pass through physical matter, e.g., through a closed door; that both "most often appear to people with whom they have strong emotional bonds"; that both tend to occur at moments of emotional crisis, danger, etc.; and that both are "not only seen but sometimes heard to speak, and sometimes felt to touch" the percipient of them. Because of the similarity in all these respects between the apparitions of the living and those of the dead, Hart concludes that "the most rational working hypothesis is that the apparitions of the dead, like those of the living, are, at least at times, the vehicles of the central focus of consciousness which says 'I' within a personality. If this is true, then the conscious spirit does survive death."[18]

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[17] Readers who may wish to look into the question for themselves are referred to three letters from Sir Wm. Crookes, published in the London *Spiritualist* for February 6, April 3, and June 5, 1874, reproduced in the book *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by Crookes (Manchester: Two Worlds Publishing Co., 1926); to Florence Marryat, *There Is No Death* (New York: Lovell, Coryell & Co., 1891), chap. xvi; and to Théodore Flournoy, *Spiritism and Psychology* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1911), chap. vi, especially pp. 218–20. See also Nándor Fodor's exposition and psychoanalytic interpretation of the case of the Bell "witch" in *Haunted People*, by H. Carrington and N. Fodor (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1951), pp. 142–74.

Another class of occurrences asserted to constitute empirical evidence of survival consists of the communications given by the persons called automatists. These are men or women, whose organs of expression—their hand, holding a pencil, or their vocal organs—function at times automatically; that is, write or speak words that are not the expression of thoughts present to their consciousness at the time or of knowledge they possess, but appear to be as independent of these as, for instance, my words at this moment are independent of the thoughts of, and of the stock of knowledge possessed by, another person who happens to read them. The automatist is usually in trance at such times, but there are many cases where he is not, and where, for example, he will be engaged in conversation with someone present, and yet his hand will at the same time be writing, on some totally different subject, a lengthy communication of whose content he knows nothing until he reads it afterward.

The communications so obtained generally purport to come—either directly or through some invisible intermediary referred to as the automatist's "control"—from a person who has died and whose spirit has survived death. Such communications are far less spectacular than apparitions, and are therefore perhaps less impressive to most of the persons who receive them; but in many cases they have contained numerous items of evidence, of the very kinds which, for instance, would satisfy one of the identity of a person claiming to be his brother, with whom he could communicate at the time only through the intermediary of some third person or by telephone.

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[18] "Psychical Research and Life Beyond Death," The Garvin Lecture for 1943, printed as chap. iv of *Man's Destiny in Eternity*, The Garvin Lectures (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949), p. 98.

Some of the most evidential communications of this kind on record were given by the celebrated automatist, Mrs. Leonora Piper, who was investigated by men of science perhaps for more years, and more systematically and minutely, than any other automatist. In giving here a sample of the evidential sort of material contained in some of her communications, there is no need to go into details as to the manner of their reception, except to say that she was in trance at such times. The instance I shall cite is that of communications which had been received, and were published in 1901, by James H. Hyslop, Professor of Logic and Ethics at Columbia University. They purported to come from several of his dead relatives, and in particular from his father. Their content included a statement of Professor Hyslop's name, James; of his father's name, and of the names of three others of his father's children. Also, references to a number of particular conversations the father had had with Professor Hyslop, to many special incidents and facts, and to family matters. Examples would be that the father had trouble with his left eye, that he had a mark behind the ear, that he used to wear a thin coat or dressing gown mornings and that he once wore a black skull cap at night, that he used to have one round and one square bottle on his desk and carried a brown-handled penknife with which he used to pare his nails, that he had a horse called Tom, that he used to write with quill pens which he trimmed himself; and so on. A number of these facts were unknown to Professor Hyslop, but were found to be true after inquiry. The communications also contained favorite pieces of advice, which the father had been in the habit of uttering, and these worded in ways characteristic of his modes of speech.

The communications which purported to come from other dead relatives, and indeed those given by Mrs. Piper to scores and scores of other sitters over the years, were often similarly of facts or incidents too trivial to have become matters of public knowledge, or indeed to have been ascertainable by a stranger without elaborate inquiries, if at all. Facts of this kind are therefore all the more significant as *prima facie* evidences of identity.

The question immediately arises, of course, whether the giving out of such facts by an automatist may not be explicable on some other hypothesis than that of communication with the dead. The first to suggest itself is that she obtained antecedently in some perfectly normal manner the information communicated. In Mrs. Piper's case, however, this explanation is completely ruled out by the elaborate precautions which were taken. For example, both Mrs. Piper and her husband were watched for weeks by detectives, to find out whether they went about making inquiries concerning the relatives and family history of persons they might have expected to come for sittings. Nothing in the slightest degree suspicious was ever found. Moreover, sittings were arranged for through Dr. Hodgson, who was at that time Secretary of the American Society for Psychical Research, and sitters were introduced by him under assumed names. Sometimes, they did not come into the room until after Mrs. Piper was in trance, and then remained behind her where she could not have seen them even if her eyes had been open. On her first trip to England, Mrs. Piper stayed in the houses of Sidgwick, Myers, or Lodge, or in lodgings selected by them. The few letters she received were examined and most of them read, with her permission, by Sidgwick, Myers, or Lodge. Many of the facts she gave out could not have been learned even by a skilled detective; and to learn such others as could have been so learned would have required a vast expenditure of time and money, which Mrs. Piper did not have. William James summed up the case against the fraud explanation in the statement that "not only has there not been one single suspicious circumstance remarked" during the many years in which she and her mode of life were under close observation, "but not one suggestion has ever been made from any quarter which might tend to explain how the medium, living the apparent life she leads, could possibly collect information about so many sitters by natural means." Thus, because we do not merely believe but positively know that the information she gave was not obtained by her in any of the normal manners, there is in her case no escape from the fact that it had some paranormal source.

The paranormal explanation of it, which has been advanced as alternative to the survival hypothesis, is that, in the trance condition, Mrs. Piper possessed powers of telepathy by which she obtained the information she gave from the minds of persons having it, even if it was at the time buried in their subconsciousness, and no matter where on earth such persons happened to be at the time; or else that she was able to observe clairvoyantly the past acts, experiences, and surroundings of the life on earth of persons now dead. Either of these suppositions is hardly less strange to ordinary experience than would be converse with the spirits of the dead; but, to explain the *form* the communications take, we have to suppose in addition that the spirits purportedly communicating are in reality dissociated secondary personalities of Mrs. Piper's, which, on the basis of the information clairvoyantly or telepathically obtained, then impersonate, whether automatically or deliberately but often with notable verisimilitude, the dead friend or relative of the sitter.

Although the hypnotic trance is apparently not the same as the mediumistic, the hypothesis of such impersonation receives some support from what is known of the remarkable histrionic capacities of persons under hypnosis. The hypnotized subject enacts with surprising convincingness the role of any character which, as a result of suggestion, he imagines himself to be. This would account for the fact that, in some instances, communications have been received from characters out of fiction, such as Adam Bede; and that, on one occasion, Professor G. Stanley Hall had, through Mrs. Piper, communications from a girl, Bessie Beals, who was a purely fictitious niece of his invented by him for the purpose of the experiment. Again, there are cases on record where the communications have asserted things that were in fact false, but that were believed to be true by the sitter or by some living third person. This, and a good deal of other evidence, shows that the trance personality of the automatist does possess extensive telepathic and clairvoyant powers, and that these do, in some cases at least, play a part in the communications. It must not be forgotten that, whatever may be the correct explanation of the automatists' communications, the explanation must account for such spurious communicators as just mentioned, no less than for those where, as in the case of Professor Hyslop's father and many others, the communicator gives impressive evidence of his identity.

Attempts have been made to devise tests that would rule out the telepathy and impersonation hypothesis, and would leave only the survival explanation in sight; and some of these attempts have the appearance of having originated with the communicating personalities themselves, rather than with the sitters. For example, a personality, giving evidences of being the same one, has given communications through different automatists who were not in touch with one another. Again, two such communications, each making some unintelligible classical allusion, have, when put together, become quite clear, and have seemed to show that the communicating entity not only possessed the needed classical erudition, but also was exercising initiative and ingenuity in devising a piece of evidence that would strain the telepathy or clairvoyance explanation to the breaking point.

A place is reached in such cases, where, as stated at the beginning of the present section, one has to ask himself what, if he could get it, he would regard as definite proof of survival; and he then has to answer for himself the question whether such facts as just referred to furnish it. All that can be said here is that, when one reads, not as above mere summaries or samples of the communications, but the original full reports of the sittings, with all the detail of the conversation between the sitter and the communicators and between one communicator and another, one realizes why the impersonation hypothesis has in some cases seemed so implausible in the concrete to the sitters and to many close students of the records. Some of the keenest-minded and best informed persons, who studied the evidence over many years in a highly critical spirit, eventually came to the conclusion that, in some cases at least, only the survival hypothesis remained plausible. Among such persons may be mentioned Alfred Russel Wallace, Sir William Crookes, F. W. H. Myers, Cesare Lombroso, Camille Flammarion, Sir Oliver Lodge, Dr. Richard Hodgson, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick and Professor Hyslop, to name only a few of the most eminent.

This suggests that the belief in a life after death, which so many persons have found no particular difficulty in accepting as an article of religious faith, not only may be true but is perhaps capable of empirical proof; and if so, that, instead of the inventions of theologians concerning the nature of the *post-mortem* life, factual information regarding it may eventually be obtained. That, in such a case, the content of this information will turn out to be useful, rather than not, for the two tasks which it is the function of religion to perform, does not, of course, automatically follow.

## Chapter 18

# RELIGION IN PERSPECTIVE

To bring now to a close our discussion of religion, let us first review briefly the ground we have traversed, and then, with benefit of the perspective our long exploration of it has won us, let us ask what we may conclude as to the worth of religion to man and its possible future.

### Review of the Ground Traversed

After considering various types of interest in religion and indicating the particular one among them which determined the inquiry we proposed to undertake, we called attention to certain features of some religions. These features were important for our purpose not primarily on account of the intrinsic interest of some of them, but rather because, being so markedly different from those found in the religions most familiar in the West, attention to them forcibly broadened for us the catalogue of beliefs, observances, and objects to be classed as religious. This in turn—even if less adequately than a survey of the whole history of religion would have—served to define concretely for us the task of discovering a conception of religion both comprehensive enough to embrace all that diversity, and discriminating enough not to mistake as belonging to the essence of religion any of its mere accidents, or any of the variety of credal, ritual, or other implements which differentiate one religion from another.

Before we could address ourselves to this task, however, we found it necessary to analyze with some care a number of terms which invariably appear in discussions of religion, but which are usually employed only with either a vague or else a more or less sectarian notion of their meaning.

We then examined a number of the more painstaking attempts which philosophers have made to formulate a really generic conception of religion; and, after considering the merits and defects of their proposed definitions, we offered one which appeared to incorporate their sound features and avoid their defects. This definition conceived religion, not in terms of any particular set of beliefs and observances, but in terms of certain functions which we specified, and of faith as instrument for their performance—a religion being any set of articles of faith, together with the observances related to them, that tends to perform those functions. Two chapters were then given to an account of historical instances in which the religions, in the hands of their too human devotees, have failed to perform those functions, or indeed have positively subverted them.

We then considered and discussed a number of the more notable psychological phenomena of the religious life—acquisition of faith, conversion, the cult, prayer, the mystical experience; and, in the three chapters which followed, we examined, and appraised in respect of error, truth, or probability, some of the more familiar dogmas of religion.

Now the point is reached at which we must ask what our scrutiny of all these matters has accomplished. What light does it throw on the worth and the cost of religion to mankind? Does any substitute for religious faith exist, better able than religion to perform the functions we described? And, since nothing human seems to stay put, what of the future of religion?

## The Generic Nature of Religion Restated

The basis on which our answers to these questions must rest is the conception we offered of what religion essentially is. Let us therefore recall it explicitly at this point. A religion, we maintained, is any set of articles of faith—together with the observances, attitudes, obligations, and feelings tied up therewith—which, in so far as it is influential in a person, tends to perform two functions, one social and the other personal. The social function is to provide motivation for the individual to conduct himself altruistically on occasions when his individual interest conflicts with that of society and when neither his spontaneous altruistic impulses, nor the sanctions of the laws or of public opinion, are potent enough by themselves or together to motivate such conduct. The personal function, on the other hand, is to give the individual in some measure the serene assurance out of which flows courage on occasions of fear, endurance in adversity, strength in moments of weakness, dignity in defeat, humility in success, conscientiousness and moderation in the exercise of power.

Evidently, these two functions are of outstanding importance in the social and the personal life of man; and if Religion is indeed the name of any faith that tends to perform them, then religion, in so far as it actually does so, is correspondingly of immense value to mankind.

## The Religions as Seen in Rational Perspective

This conception of religion, in terms of faith relevant to those two functions, makes it possible to see in rational perspective all the vexing questions which arise in discussions of this emotion-loaded subject. It enables one to view not merely with tolerance, but with the sympathy which comes from understanding, religions other than one's own in so far as they do for their devotees and their societies, at whatever stage of personal development and of civilization these happen to have reached, what it is the business of religion to do. Indeed, that conception of religion enables even the wholly religionless person, if there be any such, to perceive the nature and appreciate the value of the services which religion can and in some measure does render to the deeply religious man personally, and to society through him.

But that same conception of religion puts one equally in position to be intelligently and impersonally yet militantly critical of any religion, including one's own, in so far as the beliefs or the practices of it happen to subvert, instead of discharging as they should, the two momentous functions we have described.

The objective, rational appraisals of particular religious beliefs or practices, which our generic conception of the nature of religion makes possible, is something very different, even when the appraisal turns out adverse, from the appraisals in naïve black and white that issue out of emotional aversions or attachments. The latter appraisals make evident only the incapacity of those who voice them to discriminate between essence and accident or between functions and implements; and their disregard of differences between individuals, cultures, and resulting particular needs. It is conceptions of religion thus bigoted, which have generated the intolerance and led to the persecutions which so often in the past and even the present have marred the record of especially the monotheistic religions.

### Religion and the State

The conception we reached of the generic nature of religion also has implications as to what kind of relation between the State and religion is rationally defensible. Because, in spite of their claims, all religious beliefs alike ultimately have the status not of facts proved but only of matters of faith, and because faiths differ, the State's proper role toward religion is only to grant room to all religious faiths alike—whether monotheistic, polytheistic, pantheistic, nontheistic, or even, like some contemporary Humanism, atheistic—so long as their teachings and practices are not antisocial; and to prevent the various religions from interfering forcibly with one another. That complete neutrality as regards their diverse beliefs, and complete equality of treatment of all of them, is the only rationally defensible position for the State to take toward the religions of its citizens has fortunately been perceived clearly enough in these United States to ensure the separation of Church and State.

## Religion and Science

Perception of what constitutes the common essence of all the religions also illuminates the merits of the claims which religion on the one hand, and science on the other, have to man's allegiance. That perception, let us recall once more, emphasizes that religious beliefs are ultimately matters of faith, not of knowledge. That is, they are beliefs which are either unsupported by any evidence, or which go beyond what any available evidence rationally warrants. Scientific beliefs, on the other hand, are the outcome of methodical inquiry, that is, of observation, experiment, demonstration, and verification. They are proportioned in firmness and in content to what the inquiry has justified. They make no claims to absoluteness or finality, but on the contrary are always open to such correction as further inquiry may show to be necessary. These characteristics together define the status called *Knowledge*—knowledge, of course, mostly of probabilities rather than of certainties—which belongs to such beliefs as are properly termed scientific.

Unquestionably, knowledge, when available, is better than merely faith. But, granting this fully, the fact remains that innumerable occasions arise, and doubtless long will, on which the knowledge and power which scientific inquiry has yielded up to the moment is quite insufficient to meet man's needs on those occasions; and religion, which has demonstrated some capacity to deal effectively with the resulting psychological emergencies, therefore retains, even in the lives of many highly intelligent and scientifically educated persons—and all the more in the lives of the masses of average and below average men and women—a legitimate place and a vastly important function.

Moreover, the conception of the nature of religion set forth, which insists that religious beliefs have the status not of knowledge but only of faith, insists also on reminding the scientifically trained person and the latter's untrained but devoted fellow travelers, that *belief*, provided only that it be strong, shapes action, feeling and attitude, with equal effectiveness whether the particular belief concerned has the status of knowledge or only that of faith; and if the latter, equally whether that which is believed happens to be true or to be false. Furthermore, devotees of science looking at religion must not ignore, as religious bigots do, the fact that, because of the wide differences among human beings in respect of intelligence, education, cultural environment, tradition, and personal experience, some persons are able to believe quite easily things which some others find incredible, and, conversely, that what the latter can believe, the former cannot; and yet that most, even if not quite all, of these very different persons have the kinds of psychological needs, and the defects of character, which it is the function of religion respectively to satisfy, and to mitigate. Also, it must not be forgotten that the power which science puts into the hands of man is capable of being used by him for evil purposes as easily and as effectively as for good; so that, besides the task of arming man with power over Nature, which the natural sciences perform, there remains the task of making him good, that is, honest and noble even "in the dark"—even when not watched. This task religion takes up at the point where the laws and public opinion, which of course have no power over a man's secret actions, perforce abandon it; and, that religion's way of going about it is not altogether psychologically unscientific is shown by the fact that it succeeds to some extent in performing it. Religion has always tacitly but correctly assumed that it is not rational to treat irrational persons as it would be rational to do if they were rational. And the few "beautiful souls" who, without any religious beliefs but simply out of inclination, are capable of living religiously—that is, of maintaining the inner peace and the nobility of conduct which it is the function of religion to promote—must remember that persons with a disposition as admirable as their own are few indeed; and that the many, whom nature or nurture has less felicitously equipped, often need the psychological tonic or sedative, and the motivation for altruism, which religious faith can bring.

Religion, we therefore reaffirm—though not universally one particular form of it rather than another—has been and still is something of very great value to mankind, notwithstanding the evils which have been done in the name of religion, and which we have considered at some length.

### What Could Be Better Than Religious Faith

But now, what of the future of religion? Even if the balance of its values has been and should continue to be positive rather than negative, is its debit side destined to go on being as heavy as in the past? And is there in sight any agency other than religion, that might perform the latter's tasks as effectively as it does or more so, and withal be freer from perversions than religion has been?

In the past, growing knowledge of the universe, of man, and of the history of religion; and gradually more severely objective philosophical scrutiny of the inventions of theologians; have been the agencies which swept away some of the gratuitous stupidities and errors that contaminated the various religions. The probability is that in the future too, those same agencies will be the ones to carry forward this process.

It should be noticed, however, that such purgation of religious beliefs by scientific knowledge as has taken place has concerned only what in fact are only accidentals of religion—matters astronomical, geological, or biological, which really had no essential connection with, nor genuine utility for, the functions of religion; and which had come to be matters of religious belief only as chance carry-overs from a prescientific stage of human culture. The natural-scientific knowledge which scraped away from Western religion such intellectual barnacles as the story of Adam's rib, the creation of the world in literally seven days, or the immobility of the earth, is not in any way itself a substitute for those others among religious beliefs which, unlike these, do provide motivation for altruistic conduct or bring inner peace.

The only imaginable substitutes for such functional articles of faith would be items of *verified knowledge*, happening to have either the very same content, or a content different but equivalent in the sense of having the same capacity to implement the two great functions of religion. Such a substitute would be an improvement over religion because faith, i.e., unsupported or insufficiently supported belief, is never as secure as verified knowledge, and is seldom as firm, clear or precise, or therefore as potent.

If, for example, it were possible to anyone who wished to do so to ring up Hell, or as the case might be, Heaven, as easily as he can now ring up another city, and get in this way from his defunct aunt Mary a detailed account of her present surroundings, experiences and occupations; and if her account were corroborated by other and possibly more scientifically trained inmates of those regions, and perhaps also by occasional specially gifted and venturesome explorers of them still living on earth; then Hell and Heaven would certainly acquire in peoples' minds a concrete reality comparable to that of the Alcatraz penitentiary and of Palm Beach. In this way, both the skepticism of unbelievers, with regard to such *post mor-*

*tem* regions, and the extravagances or nebulosities of the believers' imaginings, would be swept away. Facts definitely known would have taken their place. Soberly intelligent adjustment of one's life with reference to those facts could then be made, and doubtless would be made more widely and earnestly than adjustments are now made to those imaginary pictures. The gamble inherent equally in skepticism and in groundless belief would have been eliminated.

This crude illustration, of course, must not be taken to assume that anything like the traditional Heaven and Hell would be what scientific exploration of the *post mortem* world, if there be any, would disclose. The points of the illustration are only, first, to make evident the superior effectiveness which eschatological *knowledge* would have over eschatological *mere faith*; and secondly, to indicate the sort of direction which scientific inquiry must take in so far as its results are to be capable at all of eventually constituting a substitute for and an improvement over the articles of faith of the theistic and the nontheistic religions, as well as over those of the contemporary, supposititiously scientific religious Humanism.

More explicitly, the questions, affirmative answers to which have the kind of psychological leverage relevant to the two momentous functions whose performance has until now been left to faith, are questions such as whether there is for the individual some kind of life after death, and if so, what kind; whether justice for the individual somehow ultimately obtains; whether there are gods, demons, spirits, or other invisible beings capable of aiding or plaguing men. Concerning such questions, what the religions have offered us is, let us repeat, only articles of faith. But verifiable facts are what it would be much better to have, and scientific investigation may be capable of giving them to us. Not, however, the investigations carried on by physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology, or any of the other sciences that take the material world as their subject of study; but instead scientific investigation of the various kinds of paranormal facts studied by parapsychology, by some psychiatrists, and by the societies devoted to what has come to be known as psychical research. For these facts strongly suggest that the universe, and the human personality, each have a dimension additional to the material one so capably and successfully explored by the natural sciences.

If this is truly the case, then scientific exploration of these nonmaterial dimensions is probably the most vital task before man today; for the material sciences, which have brought to him a degree of material well-being impossible before, have also put into his hands the power to destroy all civilization, or perhaps even all life on earth. And, because his religious beliefs apparently are not potent enough to restrain him from folly, he seems now fairly on the way to do just that. But sure facts, instead of mere beliefs, concerning the questions mentioned above, might have the psychological leverage needed to save man from himself.

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